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*The*  
TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA  
CIRCUIT RIDER

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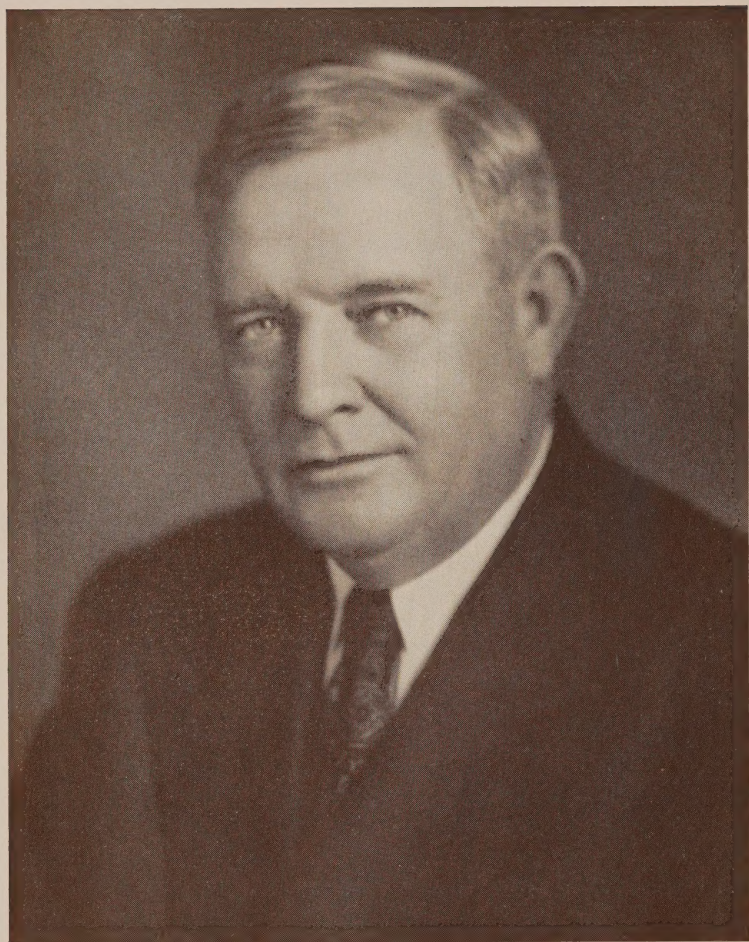
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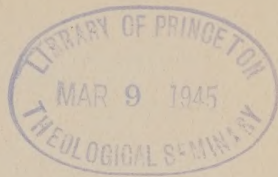
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*The*  
TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA  
CIRCUIT RIDER

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RISE OF  
METHODISM IN MIDDLE AND  
EAST FLORIDA

*By* ✓  
CHARLES TINSLEY THRIFT, JR.



THE FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE PRESS  
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TO  
MY MOTHER  
AND  
MY FATHER

*Forty years followers of the trail of  
the circuit riders of Virginia  
and North Carolina*





# INTRODUCTION

*By*

LUDD M. SPIVEY

*President of Florida Southern College, Lakeland, Florida  
Chairman of the committee on history of the Centennial  
Commission of the Florida Conference of The  
Methodist Church*

FLORIDA Methodism has long needed such a book as this, and now that it is written I am sure that it will prove quite stimulating to all the Methodists of the state. The author interrupted a much more extended study of Methodism and Protestantism in Florida to write this volume so that it might be made available during the centennial celebration of the Florida Conference. He is also writing a history of Florida Southern College to be published in 1945 in connection with the observance of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the college. These forthcoming volumes will present a much more detailed history of Methodism in Florida than has been possible within the limits of this study. Meanwhile, I am glad to commend this book, the most comprehensive account of Florida Methodism ever written, to its wide audience.



## PREFACE

THIS little volume is intended primarily as a brief introduction to the nineteenth-century development of those groups now composing the Florida Conference of the Methodist Church. The present Florida Conference perpetuates the work of the Florida Conference of the former Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the St. Johns River Conference of the former Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Florida Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. Since the area of none of these groups included that portion of Florida lying west of the Apalachicola River, attention in this study has been limited largely to that area of Florida lying east of that river, a region first denominated East Florida, but early in the territorial period divided at the Suwannee River into Middle and East Florida. The twentieth century approaches the contemporary and historians cannot deal objectively with the present, consequently the final chapter is merely a brief summation of more or less contemporaneous events.

Grateful acknowledgments are due to many people who have aided in one way or another in the preparation of this book. I am pre-eminently indebted to Dean Shirley Jackson Case of the Florida School of Religion who originally suggested the larger study on Florida Protestantism of which this is a part and who read the manuscript and made numerous suggestions which have greatly increased its value. I am similarly indebted to

## PREFACE

President Ludd M. Spivey of Florida Southern College who made available the source materials upon which this study is based.

Thanks are due, also: to Mr. Fred T. Barnett who placed his excellent collection on Florida Methodism at my disposal and who read most of the manuscript; to Secretary of State R. A. Gray (a grandson of Robert Hudson Howren who was a charter member of the original Florida Conference), who provided me with the records of early Tallahassee Methodism and many official documents filed in his office; and to Dr. Dorothy Dodd, archivist of the state of Florida, who brought many items to my attention that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

To Miss Oween Sumner, librarian of Florida Southern College, and Mrs. Alberta Johnson, acting-librarian of the Florida Historical Society, who have been especially kind in supplying me with materials from their libraries, I am much indebted. My deep appreciation is also due Miss Claire Wilks who has prepared the manuscript for the press, and Mr. Charles T. Brown and my wife who have read the proof.

Acknowledgment is also made of the courtesy of the University of North Carolina Press in permitting me to reproduce several maps from *Florida-Land of Change*, by Kathryn Trimmer Abbey; of Mr. T. Frederick Davis in allowing the use of an illustration from his *History of Jacksonville*; and of Mr. Kent Hagerman who designed the cover and made several of the illustrations.

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## CHAPTER I

### BLAZING THE TRAIL

FLORIDA was old, far older than any of the states in the Union to the northward, when Methodism first crossed her border. Just exactly when or where Methodism first entered Florida is yet a secret locked in that mysterious chest of long forgotten memories of the past, placed there by some now nameless circuit rider as he blazed a wilderness trail, and there it will probably remain throughout the ages. The finger of probability points, however, at first one place and then another, lingering longer over the northeastern corner of Florida. The river route to Amelia Island and the King's Road via the Cow Ford [Jacksonville] to St. Augustine were the highways by which untold numbers of men and movements from the United States entered Florida during the second period of Spanish control. Though officially forbidden, Methodism could easily have been one of these immigrants, for the border circuit riders were ever alert to missionary possibilities.

Be that as it may, Methodism did emerge in Florida with the coming of the American period in 1821 and by 1825 had grown sturdy enough to take a few steps of its own with a district called the Tallahassee after the newly established capital of the territory. Henceforward, Methodism and the territory grew along together through wilderness, disease, Indian troubles, and

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financial difficulties, both reaching maturity at the same time a few years past the age of twenty-one when in 1845 the territory became a state and the scattered charges became a conference.

The Florida that was ceded by Spain in 1821 has been aptly described as little more than a "geographical expression." When the United States took formal possession in July, 1821, there were but two towns, St. Augustine and Pensacola, in two quite separate provinces, East and West Florida. There were virtually no towns between these two capitals, and most of the vast wilderness between St. Augustine and Pensacola was inhabited by Indians who were none too friendly. There had formerly been a path, graced by later settlers with the rather romantic name of "The Old Spanish Trail," between St. Augustine and Pensacola, but this had fallen into disuse long before Spain bowed out. The only road of any importance at the time of Florida's cession to the United States was the famous King's Road, constructed early in the English interlude in Florida history. This road originally led from as far south as New Smyrna to St. Augustine, thence through the Cow Ford [Jacksonville] to Colerain, Georgia, on the St. Marys River, and then on up into Georgia. The section south of St. Augustine had been long abandoned.

## THE SPANISH TRAIL

For more than three centuries, Florida's trail was a Spanish trail. Ever since 1513 when *Pascua Florida*, or Easter, gave its name to the newly discovered peninsula, the trail of the missionary has been a familiar one

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in Florida. While insofar as is known no priests were in the first expedition, Ponce De Leon secured in 1514 an extension of his patent authorizing him to summon the Indians to embrace the Christian faith. Later expeditions under Narvaez and De Soto were accompanied by Franciscan friars. With this beginning, Roman Catholicism became the predominant religion from the period of colonization until well after the close of the Spanish ownership, and has remained ever since one of the substantial religious groups of the peninsula.

Throughout the greater part of the colonial period, Roman Catholicism was the only tolerated Christian group. The first interruption of the Catholic monopoly probably came on the morning of May 1, 1562, when the group of French Huguenots under Jean Ribault landed at the mouth of the river later called St. Johns and joined in what is apparently the first Protestant religious service on the North American continent. French Huguenots two years later established a short-lived settlement nearby at what they called Fort Caroline. This, together with the period from 1763 to interruption of absolute Spanish and, consequently, interruptions of absolute Spanish and, consequently, Roman Catholic control. During the British period a number of missionaries dispatched by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts made fair progress in establishing the Church of England, but this passed with the return of Spanish rule.

Florida's second Spanish period, extending from 1783 to 1821, saw Spanish influence diminishing and that of the United States ascending. There were many

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forays, some semi-official and others distinctly in the nature of raids or plundering parties, from the United States. Florida was the key to the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico; and Spain, France, England, and the United States were engaged in a rather odd struggle to turn that key. France virtually renounced her claim when she sold Louisiana; and England was effectively eliminated with the conclusion of the War of 1812, thus leaving the key and its chain to Spain and the United States. Spain held the key, but the United States held the chain with such a close grip that the key was of little value. With no hope of wresting the chain, Spain sold the key in 1819 and delivered it in 1821. Henceforward, the key and the chain were American in fact as well as in location.

### FROM ALDERSGATE TO AMELIA ISLAND

The Methodist movement was as yet unborn when John and Charles Wesley boarded ship on October 19, 1735, bound for Georgia, John as missionary to the colonists and Indians, Charles as secretary to General James Oglethorpe. True, the Holy Club of Oxford had been formed a decade earlier, but the beginning of Methodism was still some three years or more in the future. When John Wesley landed in Georgia, he was a rigid high-churchman and a strict sacramentarian. He labored for a little less than two years among the settlers—he found little opportunity to minister to the Indians—but his high church rigidity made him appear tactless and severe. He was distinctly not a Methodist when he sailed from Savannah on Christmas eve, 1737,

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so even had he visited Florida during his Georgia days he would have come not as a Methodist but as an Anglican, though, it is true, as a more than ordinarily disturbed one. None of the Methodist founding fathers, it seems, ever visited Florida, not even by accident, as had occasioned Charles Wesley's visit to Boston when the ship on which he was traveling was driven there by a storm.

The Wesleyan movement, from which was born the Methodist church, really dates from May, 1738, the month in which both Charles and John Wesley found a new depth and certainty in religious living. Charles "found deeper rest for his soul" on the twenty-first of that month and John dated his new experience from an evening three days later when he attended a little gathering in a secluded room on Aldersgate Street, London, and in the midst of the meeting, he recorded later, he found his "heart strangely warmed." Methodism as an organization dates from the year 1739, when John Wesley drew up for his society in London a set of rules for the regulation and control of the religious life and activities of the members. As other societies formed and adopted his rules, Wesley found himself engaged in traveling over England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, visiting and advising the various groups. Meanwhile, it should be remembered, the Methodist movement was still within the Church of England and there remained for many years, not severing relations completely until after the death of Wesley.

While the Wesleyan revival was getting under way in England, a similar movement was beginning in the

American colonies. Absolutely separate in their origin, these two revival movements were later connected through the work of George Whitefield, who had earlier been associated with the Wesleys but who in time became the greatest revival preacher of the American colonial era. The American revival, which is generally known as the Great Awakening, had its beginning during the winter of 1734 in Northampton, Massachusetts, under the preaching of the local Congregational minister, Jonathan Edwards, who was perhaps the most able theologian and philosopher produced in colonial America. This revival movement spread southward from New England, passing through several distinct phases as it swept over first one colony and then another. It finally became centered in Virginia and was thought to be waning rapidly about 1765 when the Methodists first appeared in the colonies.

Just as it is impossible to determine where, and when, and by whom Methodism was first introduced into Florida, just so it is in regard to the beginning of Methodism in America. It is sufficient to say that Methodism was introduced into the colonies, as indeed it may well have been in Florida, by two local (unordained) preachers who began their work at about the same time. One of these, Philip Embury, was an Irish local preacher who came to New York in 1760; but it was not until 1766, largely through the influence of Mrs. Barbara Heck, a relative, that he began to preach in his own house. Another Irish immigrant, Robert Strawbridge, who had come to Maryland, began to preach at about the same time as Embury. The two Methodist societies growing out of their preaching, one in New York

## BLAZING THE TRAIL

and the other in Maryland, were the first two Methodist societies in America.

With the formation of these societies a request was sent to John Wesley asking that he send out missionaries. Wesley replied by sending Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor in 1769 and Francis Asbury in 1771, and others as they were available, until a total of eight had been sent, while four others had been permitted to come as volunteers. In 1773 the first American Methodist conference convened in Philadelphia and it was attended by ten preachers. Though the missionaries devoted most of their time to the middle colonies, the Methodist movement thrived better in the southern colonies, especially in Maryland and Virginia, where the fervor of the Great Awakening, a vast unchurched area, and the location of the Church of England of which the Methodist movement was still nominally a part, each contributed to its success. This southern growth is quite apparent when it is realized that of the 3,148 Methodists in America in 1775, 2,384 were south of Mason and Dixon's line, leaving only 764 north of that line.

The opening of hostilities in the Revolution saw all the preachers who had but recently come from England return there except Francis Asbury, who deliberately made up his mind to identify himself with the Americans and their cause. In the first years of the war Methodism lost heavily, but soon extensive revivals began in several sections remote from the battles, and the loss was not only overcome but the membership grew until, in 1784, there were nearly fifteen thousand members and eighty-three preachers. This constituency



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was then organized into the Methodist Episcopal Church of America and thereby became the first religious group to formulate a national church in the new Republic.

Following its organization, the Methodist Episcopal Church made rapid advances in most parts of the new nation, especially in the southern states. The first conference of the newly organized church was held in April, 1785, in North Carolina. Here Beverly Allen was ordained and appointed to "Georgia." By 1788 the Georgia work had progressed sufficiently for Bishop Francis Asbury to visit the state and hold a conference, at which ten ministers were present, four of whom held only a probationary relationship. Conferences were held annually in Georgia until 1794, when the work in Georgia was merged with the work in South Carolina. From 1795 to 1830 the state of Georgia, and in time the adjacent work in Middle and East Florida (and for a brief period even West Florida), was under the supervision of the South Carolina Conference.

St. Marys, Georgia, just across the river from Florida, first appeared in the appointments of the South Carolina Conference in 1799. Annually from that time until 1822 St. Marys, usually alone but once combined with Savannah and later with Satilla, appeared. This appointment was a circuit extending along the course of the St. Marys (which divided Georgia from Florida for many miles) and Satilla rivers. The proximity of this circuit, coupled with the many varied relationships of this area with Florida, would tend to indicate that Methodism most likely entered hereabouts. Certain it is, that when the Methodists first took official notice of



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East Florida, it was by adding "Amelia Island" to their St. Marys appointment of long standing.

## ADVANCING ON FLORIDA

Florida was officially closed to Protestantism until its transfer to the United States in 1821, but of the hundreds of settlers pushing across the border during



DWELLING OF THE LOG CABIN ERA IN JACKSONVILLE

*Courtesy T. Frederick Davis, author of History of Jacksonville*

the last decade of Spanish control many were active members of the various evangelical denominations. Some of these were Methodists, some even Methodist local preachers, so that in all probability Florida Methodism had a beginning not unlike American Methodism, under the ministry of local preachers.

Tradition early conferred upon John Slade the title of "Father of Methodism in Florida," though it was always added parenthetically that he was not the first to preach there. Slade may well have been in the Meth-

odist vanguard, for the name of one John Slade, together with that one Frederick Slade, appears among the one hundred and five "patriot" signers of the petition of the short-lived "Republic of East Florida," dated January 25, 1814, asking for admission to the Union. Slade, a native of South Carolina, at the age of thirty-three in 1823 was admitted to the traveling ministry of the South Carolina Conference and was assigned to the Georgia-Florida frontier region. After several years he retired to his Florida farm, but was re-admitted to the traveling ministry at the first session of the Florida Conference in 1845. Just what the nature of Slade's work was which earned for him his title will probably remain forever a secret.

John Triggs is another upon whom tradition has conferred some honor in connection with initiating the Methodist movement in Florida, but here again the facts will probably remain a mystery. What is known of Triggs is that he was admitted on trial into the South Carolina Conference in January, 1821, and assigned to a new and rather ill-defined circuit in South Georgia called in the minutes Lappahee, probably intended for Alapaha. The supposition is that his journeys extended over into Florida. Whatever his field may have been in 1821, it is known that in 1822 and 1823 he labored quite successfully in eastern Alabama, western Georgia, and West Florida, under appointment the first year to "Early County [Georgia] and adjoining settlements" and the second to "Chattahoochee mission," which embraced virtually the same territory in Georgia and Alabama along the Chattahoochee River. In 1828,

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Triggs retired from the traveling ministry and located in Georgia.

No doubt Slade and Triggs and a whole host of now nameless ministers labored without honor and virtually without price along the Florida frontier for many years. The official beginning of Methodist endeavor in Florida dates from the conference held during the winter of 1821-1822. The Mississippi Conference had been formed in 1816 and in the course of supplying ministers to as much of the lower Mississippi region as possible assigned, in December, 1821, Alexander Talley to "Pensacola, Mobile, Blakely, and adjoining country." Two months later, in February, 1822, the South Carolina Conference officially added Florida work to that of the preacher in St. Marys, Georgia, by changing the style of appointment to read "St. Marys and Amelia Island," and assigning Elijah Sinclair to the new Georgia-Florida appointment. Thus to Talley, working in the western extreme of West Florida under the auspices of the Mississippi Conference, and to Sinclair, laboring on the coast of East Florida under appointment from the South Carolina Conference, goes the honor of being the first Methodist preachers whose labors officially included any of the territory of Florida. Thus Pensacola and Fernandina became established points in the circuit riders' journeys.

The Mississippi Conference continued to supply preachers for Pensacola and West Florida as long as it was able, but the scarcity of men and the demands from other directions made it necessary for Mississippi to surrender this field to the South Carolina Conference in 1826. Consequently from 1827 through 1832, West

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Florida and eastern Alabama were parts of the South Carolina Conference, as long as that conference served Georgia, and of the Georgia Conference from its creation in 1830 until the formation of the Alabama Conference at the close of 1832. The General Conference of 1832 authorized the creation of the Alabama Conference and provided it should embrace West Florida. Thus, after being administered along with the remainder of the territory for only six years, 1827 through 1832, West Florida was detached and has so remained to the present.

While West Florida was being administered along with the rest of the territory, slight advances were made eastward from Pensacola to include such appointments, parts of which at least were in Florida, as Holmes Valley, Early, Pea River, Escambia, and Chattahoochee missions, but the combined membership of all these circuits was less than fifteen hundred at the time this work was attached to Alabama.

Meanwhile, the circuits in the eastern part of the territory were expanding. Fernandina was left with St. Marys and Noah Laney was sent there in 1823, while at the same time Joshua N. Glenn was sent to St. Augustine. Glenn, thereby, became the first Methodist preacher assigned exclusively to a Florida appointment, all others up to this time having Georgia or Alabama work included in their circuits. Not only was it purely a Florida work, but it was distinctly not a circuit, as is made clear by Glenn's diary. Glenn, though, found only one Methodist in St. Augustine and his year was none too pleasant. Glenn's work is described more fully in the next section. This, except for a few changes in

## BLAZING THE TRAIL

assignments, is about the extent of Methodist development in the territory of Florida down to the close of 1824.

### JOSHUA N. GLENN, TRAIL BLAZER

Florida was purchased from Spain in a treaty negotiated February 22, 1819, but more than two and a half years elapsed before the actual transfer of flags took place. Finally, in mid-July, 1821, the territory was officially delivered to the purchasers. Florida was then placed under semi-military rule with Andrew Jackson as the governor, until March 30, 1822, when civil government was established by an act of Congress. At the outset the powers of self-government conferred upon the citizens were quite limited, with most of the officials and the members of the Legislative Council appointed by the President of the United States. Accordingly, William P. Duval became the first civil governor, and the first Legislative Council was set for June 10, 1822, at Pensacola, but it was late in July before enough members arrived to make possible the organization of the Council. This delay was occasioned by the difficulty of travel encountered by the delegates from East Florida, some of whom nearly lost their lives when their ship was wrecked. The following June the Council met in St. Augustine, and the West Florida delegates consumed nearly a month in making the trip and had the added difficulty of shipping all the territorial records by wagon to the scene of the meeting. This migratory form of government pleased no one, so it is not surprising that a commission to select a permanent site for the capital was appointed at the 1823 session.

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It was to such a Florida as this, a Florida in the throes of establishing itself, that Joshua N. Glenn was delegated at the session of the South Carolina Conference meeting in Savannah in February, 1823, to establish a Methodist mission at the seat of government in East Florida, as had already been done at the seat of government in West Florida.<sup>1</sup> Glenn had just been received into full membership in the conference when the presiding bishop, Robert R. Roberts, discussed with him the desirability of having him establish a mission in the chief city of eastern Florida. Glenn recorded that at first his "mind recoiled at the very thoughts of it," but soon he informed the bishop that he was "anxious to go." Accordingly he was assigned to St. Augustine at the close of the conference session on Friday evening, February 28, 1823.

Nearly three weeks elapsed before he was able to secure passage southward from Savannah. Finally on the nineteenth of March he sailed on the schooner Mary McCoy for St. Marys, Georgia. Arriving in St. Marys on the evening of the twenty-second, he was unable to leave until the fifth of April, when he secured passage on the mail boat, which was only ten feet long and had in addition to its usual cargo of mail, three persons, their baggage, and a special cargo of ten bushels of corn. After a strenuous voyage, Glenn arrived in St. Augustine on the eighth of April, nearly six weeks after he had received his assignment in Savannah, which was only about one hundred and fifty miles away. His diary furnishes many significant facts on life in St. Augustine in 1823.



## BLAZING THE TRAIL

As if delay and difficulties in travel alone were not enough to discourage even the most stout hearted, Glenn was further depressed when upon his arrival he found no organization and but one Methodist member, a Mrs. Streeter, with whom he boarded throughout the year. There was, of course, no Methodist church building, nor indeed any church building whatever, except that of the Roman Catholics. Protestant services were held successively in the council chamber by whatever ministers might happen to be in the city. Episcopal services were being conducted by ministers named Fowler and Feltch during the earlier part of Glenn's residence there, and aside from these three there appears to have been no other ministers, either Protestant or Catholic.<sup>2</sup>

Glenn preached regularly in the council chamber, soon organized a small Methodist society, and added a few members, mostly Negro, from time to time. He had been there only two weeks when he made arrangements to preach to the soldiers stationed at the camp. This venture proved to be most unsatisfactory and after only one such service, Glenn recorded in his diary that he was treated in such a manner that he "determined to go there no more." In mid-May, Allen Turner, presiding elder of the Oconee District, of which St. Augustine was a part, arrived in the city and held what was termed the first quarterly conference ever held in Florida.

A Presbyterian minister by the name of Lathrop arrived in St. Augustine on the eighteenth of May. Glenn was delighted to learn of his arrival, hoping that the two would have much in common, since fellowship with the Episcopal ministers had proved most repugnant. Relationships between Glenn and the Presby-

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terian minister were generally pleasant but friction between the Methodist and Presbyterian groups soon developed. In August an Episcopal clergyman by the name of Motte arrived in St. Augustine. Frictions of some nature developed between the three Protestant groups and by mid-August Glenn was preaching in the council chamber and Lathrop and Motte were dividing the use of the courthouse. Late in October a Catholic priest arrived and had services for a time.

The arrival of Governor Duval late in May for the ensuing June session of the Legislative Council is noted by Glenn, as well as a later contribution of ten dollars by the governor when he departed in November. Glenn was quite interested in all the political developments of the territory and made a trip to witness the negotiations leading to the Indian Treaty of Moultrie Creek in September, 1823.

Glenn carried on a heavy correspondence, as is evidenced by the fact that his postage bill between May and November on letters received alone was nearly ten dollars. A letter received on the fourth of November from Noah Laney, the Methodist preacher in St. Marys and Fernandina, contained information that led Glenn to muse over the woes of the ministry. The meager salary and the itinerant life made it difficult for Methodist preachers to marry and still remain active in the ministry. This letter from Laney contained an account of the marriage of five of Glenn's fellow ministers and the receipt of this information led Glenn to write as follows: "The Sollid and Serious J. Dunwoody, the Mild and Steady J. Reynolds, the Persevering T. L. Winn, the Powerful E. Sinclair, and the Bold and In-



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trepid, P. L. Wade all have lately fallen by the matrimonial sword. Oh how are the mighty fallen alas, alas—how are the ranks of the Single preachers thinned and while these are Slain I feare many more are Mortally wounded; and to add if possible to the Horrows of the Sceam in the case of Bro. Wade his antagonist being Fifty and Five and her palsied hand not being able to Point the dager to his heart—this noble and experienced Commandres cald to her assistance one Hundred of the Formidable Sons of Africa, Oh alass, how fatal.”

Glenn ended his year, which had been only about nine months but which had seemed to him like ages, on the twentieth of January, 1824, when he left for Charleston to attend the session of the South Carolina Conference. During the year he had married three couples, officiated at two funerals and assisted in many more, and baptized twenty-one Negroes and an unrecorded number of whites. He had received a fifty-dollar draft on the Missionary Society from the bishop before leaving Savannah, during the year he collected \$198.50, mostly in small amounts, except for a fifty-dollar contribution from the Young Men's Missionary Society of Savannah. His expenses show \$164 paid for board and \$54.12½ expended for travel. This left less than thirty dollars for Glenn for the year. His report to the conference showed a total of twelve white and forty Negro members in the St. Augustine society.

Glenn was succeeded by Noah Laney and the Methodist work in St. Augustine prospered for several years, a meeting-house being built in 1829 during the ministry of Isaac Boring. By 1834 the Methodist group

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### DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN FLORIDA, 1830

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had become quite small and beginning in 1836 no minister was assigned there for a decade.

### ALONG THE BELLAMY ROAD

Tallahassee was but recently founded when the Legislative Council assembled there late in 1824. The commissioners appointed the previous year had wandered over the Indian trails of the region between the

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Apalachicola and the Suwannee and had finally settled upon the site for the new capital. On March 4, 1824, Governor Duval proclaimed that the permanent seat of government for Florida should be in what was then Gadsden County at a point best described as "the intersection of an Indian trail with the old Spanish road about a mile southwest of the deserted fields of Tallahassee." On the twenty-fourth of May, Congress approved the site and made a grant of land to the territory for the capital. Pensacola, Amelia Island, and St. Augustine constituted the Florida appointments of the Methodists until January, 1825, when the newly designated capital became not only a preaching appointment but the center for the first district established in Florida.<sup>3</sup> Josiah Evans was appointed to both the district and the Tallahassee preaching appointment. With the exception of the year 1833 and the years 1838-1844 when it was called the Florida district but still centered about the capital, the Tallahassee district has been in continuous existence since 1825.

Roads hardly existed, and trails were few, when in 1824 the territorial government descended upon Tallahassee, and the situation was still the same when the Methodists began to radiate from it in 1825. Such was the condition of travel in the interior of Florida that Congress had appropriated money in 1824 with which to build a road from Pensacola to St. Augustine, via Tallahassee. This road was built amidst great difficulty between 1824 and 1826. The western half was built largely by the army and came to be known as the Military Road. The section eastward from near Tallahassee was constructed by a private contractor named

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John Bellamy, and the road was soon known as the Bellamy Road. So it was along the Bellamy Road that the travel of Middle and East Florida flowed, and it was along this self-same route that the Methodist circuit riders came and went. Later, one or two north and south roads, trails they really were, were constructed, and in time reached from the Georgia line down to Fort Brooke [Tampa]. Along these routes and branching out from them over uncharted wilderness, the circuit riders followed the settlers as they descended upon the land.

The construction of a main road of travel was one of the first requisites for the development of Florida. Once this was undertaken, settlers began to move in with great rapidity. The territorial government went ahead creating counties and the Methodists creating circuits during the decade following the founding of Tallahassee, the former at this time moving a little faster than the latter. The construction of a permanent capital and an artery of communication, however, did not end the rivalry between the eastern and western parts of the territory. So bitter was the feeling between the two sections that there was always a strong minority who urged division of the territory. East Florida usually favored two parts, Middle Florida usually contended for the unity of the whole area, while West Florida frequently talked of annexation to Alabama. While sentiment never actually crystallized sufficiently to disturb the original boundary of 1821, it has already been noted how in 1832 West Florida was attached to the Alabama in the Methodist administrative set-up. This division at the Apalachicola River was not acci-

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dental, but was made at the explicit request of the Methodists of West Florida and merely mirrored the sentiment of the area, which was never quite strong enough to force a similar division politically.

Tallahassee soon became the social and agricultural as well as the political center of Florida. To this part of the territory came men who were members of the first families of the South. This middle Florida region soon had huge plantations, one for example, twelve miles east of Tallahassee, El Destino, having more than 150 slaves as early as 1835. This same region had almost half the population of the territory in the enumeration three years later. Leon County alone, of which Tallahassee is the county seat, had more than ten thousand inhabitants and was the largest single county by nearly six thousand persons. The Tallahassee country secured world-wide advertisement when the Federal government in 1825 granted to Lafayette an entire township of land, northeast of the capital, in recognition of his services to the American Revolution.

Numerous towns began to spring up around Tallahassee and their birth is proclaimed not long afterwards in the Methodist appointments. Magnolia was started in 1828 and flourished for a good many years on the St. Marks River eight miles north of St. Marks Fort and in 1830 it made its appearance in the appointments along with Tallahassee. Quincy, about twenty miles west of the capital, was laid out in 1825 and soon became a preaching appointment on the Leon Circuit, but by 1829 it was the hub of a new circuit called by its name. These, together with the other new settlements, became preaching appointments almost as soon

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as they were established, but by 1835 there were still only about a dozen circuit riders, now members of the Georgia Conference which had superseded the South Carolina Conference in the territory in 1830, who were attempting to evangelize Florida in the name of the Methodists.

Meanwhile, other Protestant groups were making beginnings in Florida, but very little is known of their early days, since adequate histories of these groups, except perhaps in the case of the Episcopalians, have never been written. The Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and the Baptists, along with the Methodists, made up the group working in Florida, along with the Roman Catholics of much longer standing. The Protestant Episcopal Church had begun activities in the territory shortly after the change of flags when Andrew Fowler had been sent to St. Augustine under the auspices of the Young Men's Missionary Society of Charleston, South Carolina. Sufficient progress had been made within the territory for the seven parishes to organize themselves into the Diocese of Florida in 1838, at the very time that sentiment favoring the admission of Florida to the Union as a state was at its height and on the very eve of the constitutional convention of 1838. Baptist churches by the names of Sardis and Bethlehem were organized in Jackson County in 1825, and are perhaps the earliest churches of that denomination in Florida; Ebenezer in Jefferson County was organized in 1828 and Indian Springs in Leon in 1829. In 1843 the Florida Baptist Association was organized, with the West Florida and Alachua associations following four years later; the Florida Baptist State Conven-

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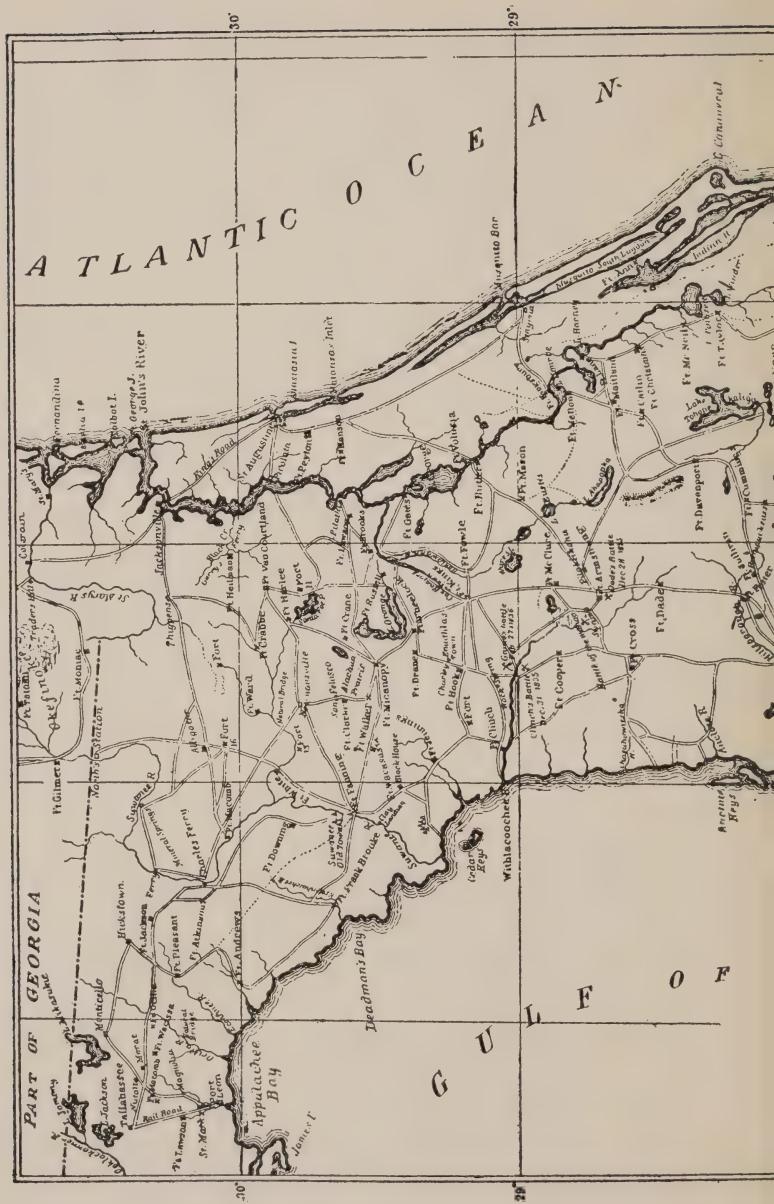
tion was organized in 1854. The Presbyterians were holding services quite early in the Euchee Valley in what is now Walton County and had established a church there by 1828, and in 1832 they constructed a church building in Tallahassee. However, for keeping up with a moving population, none of these had a system as efficient as the Methodist circuit-rider plan. Consequently, while in some areas the members of other denominations outnumbered the Methodists, quite frequently the Methodists were the only ones with regular preaching services. The itinerant system enabled the Methodists to keep abreast of settlement not only in Florida, but throughout the entire country.

### ISAAC BORING, TYPICAL TRAIL BLAZER

Typical of the circuit riders blazing the Florida trail in the first fifteen years of American rule is Isaac Boring.<sup>4</sup> Not only is Boring himself typical of the *genus* Circuit Rider, but he had the unusual fortune of serving the three chief cities of territorial Florida, Pensacola, St. Augustine, and Tallahassee, respectively, in 1828, 1829, and 1830. As well as serving these three cities of Florida, he kept a very full account of his labors and his diary has been preserved, and it is the source of much information about the Florida frontier of the late twenties. These three years, together with a year in Quincy in 1842, constitute the extent of Boring's official Florida labors, but into these years he packed a great deal of activity.

Born in Jackson County, Georgia, on the twenty-eighth of November, 1805, Isaac Boring "obtained the forgiveness of sins and witnessed the new birth" at the







# AL

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age of fourteen. He was licensed to preach at the age of nineteen, in 1824, and the following year was appointed to the Broad River Circuit of the South Carolina Conference. Pensacola Mission, to which Boring was appointed in 1828, was his fourth assignment. Most of his work in this mission was in Pensacola itself, though he had a small circuit with two or three preaching appointments, the most distant of which was less than fifty miles. In addition to his town and circuit duties, Boring preached to the Negroes once a week, and did much work among the sailors in the harbor and the soldiers at the nearby army post.

Boring's second Florida appointment was to "St. Augustine and Alachua Mission." This was an extremely difficult assignment and Boring complained bitterly at first about being sent there from Pensacola. He soon became quite reconciled to going, and this proved to be one of his most successful pastorates. In contrast to Pensacola, and in contrast to the St. Augustine of 1823 when Joshua N. Glenn had served there, little of Boring's work was done in the city itself. The major portion of the work was a circuit in which there were about fifteen preaching appointments scattered over a distance of more than two hundred miles. The circuit took the minister from St. Augustine west to the St. Johns River where he preached, thence to Jacksonville, where he also preached; from Jacksonville his course carried him southwestwardly to Alachua, where he had several congregations, and in which region he preached repeatedly to the Indians and Negroes, as well as occasionally to the soldiers at Camp King [Ocala]. Sometimes, instead of going by way of Jacksonville, he

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traveled the Bellamy Road directly to Alachua. Leaving the vicinity of present day Ocala his route took him to Palatka and then back to St. Augustine. Travel was difficult, and not infrequently did Boring lose his way, once winding up on the St. Johns River bank more than three hours after leaving Palatka for St. Augustine but unable to determine whether he was above or below the point from which he had started. In this predicament he decided to pray, after which he concluded he was below the city, which proved to be correct.

This circuit required three weeks to cover, so Boring usually preached in St. Augustine on the first and second Sundays of each month and devoted the intervening week to overseeing his work in the immediate vicinity. At the end of the year he was transferred to Tallahassee, where he found the Methodist group in a "lamentable condition." One of his first duties upon arrival in the capital was to take disciplinary action against several members. Such disciplining of members, though, was not unusual in Methodist circles and the churches have rightfully been called the "moral courts" of the frontier because of the manner in which they regulated the conduct of their members. The Tallahassee church seems to have been especially rigid in the enforcement of discipline, for the records of the church over a period of years abound in such cases, action being taken for such things as "talking too publicly and unadvisedly," rolling "ten pins," and action was even taken against the minister of the church in 1843 for "not bringing to trial members of the church under censure and which had been brought to his notice."

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### SEEKING PATHS OF LEARNING

Educational facilities both public and private developed slowly in Florida. It was not until 1828 that the Legislative Council took definite steps for the preservation and management of the sixteenth section of each township which had been granted to the state by the federal government in 1821 for the advancement of Florida education. Another eleven years elapsed before an effort was made to utilize the income from these lands for any kind of public school system. Meanwhile a number of private high schools, academies, and seminaries sprang up over the territory.

Many of these were founded either by or under the leadership of clergymen. Peter W. Gautier, a Methodist preacher from Georgia, was the moving spirit in the organization of the first educational institution ever chartered in the territory. This was the Webbville Academy which opened on February 27, 1827, in Webbville, a town about ten miles northwest of the present city of Marianna. On December 22, 1827, this academy became the first educational project to be incorporated in Florida. Gautier moved soon after this school opened, even before it was chartered, but later in the same year he was instrumental in founding Bonavista Academy on St. Andrews Bay. These ventures nurtured by Gautier, as well as many earlier and later projects of others, were quite short lived. Such, indeed, was the slight progress of education in Florida that it has been quite aptly said that the territorial days ended much as they had started as far as schools were concerned.

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From the outset, Methodism had been aware of the values of education and by 1835 many Methodist ventures in education, both in England and America, had been undertaken with varying degrees of success. Frequently, when the church was tardy in projecting schools, individual clergymen undertook to operate such private schools as their duties might permit. Such was the character of any schools begun in territorial Florida under sponsorship of Methodist preachers.

In Georgia, the Methodists had begun quite early to establish schools. As early as the second conference in Georgia, in 1789, considerable time was devoted to making plans for the establishment of a school to be known as "The Wesley and Whitefield School." Bishops Asbury and Coke wrote of the plans for the school, which seem to have included proposals to secure donations in cattle, rice, tobacco, and land. Sufficient support was never received to make this first projected school an actuality; but Hope Hull, the Georgia preacher who had supported the project most vigorously, established Succoth Academy in Wilkes County [three miles from Washington, Georgia] in 1794. Hull later aided in the founding of the University of Georgia at Athens. Sporadic efforts to establish other Methodist schools in Georgia continued until 1832, when a more definite policy was undertaken.

By this time Florida was an integral part of the Georgia Conference, so that whatever action was taken by that conference belongs to the story of the development of educational facilities by and for Florida Methodists. The Methodists had established Randolph-Macon College in Virginia in 1830 and La Grange

College in Alabama at about the same time. The representative of La Grange College visited the Georgia Conference in 1831 and was given permission to solicit funds within the bounds of the conference for his college. The next year a representative of Randolph-Macon College persuaded the conference to endow a professorship there. For several years the struggle for Georgia support continued among the friends of each school. Meanwhile a third group remained aloof and urged the establishment of a school within the bounds of the conference. Ignatius A. Few was the leader of the movement for a new Conference institution. The trustees of a manual labor school at Cullendon, Georgia, had proffered their institute to the conference and this brought the matter of the establishment of a new school squarely into the open. In 1834 the manual labor type of school was decided upon but the offer of Cullendon was not accepted and instead a similar school was established at Covington. The initial response to the project was extremely pleasing, with applications from "six surrounding states and Florida" being noted shortly. Financial difficulties and the establishment of other schools, however, led to the closing of the Covington school after about six years of operation.

Encouraged by their triumph in securing a school within the conference, the original supporters of the manual labor school had scarcely launched this project before they began to exert pressure for the establishment of a college. Consequently, in 1836 the Georgia Conference launched Emory College and appointed agents to collect funds for the erection of buildings. The college was chartered in 1837 and the buildings erected



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in Newton County, about a mile and a half from the manual labor school, in a newly created town given the name of Oxford. Ignatius A. Few, who had championed the idea of a home college so long, became the first president and students were first received in 1839. The financial panic of 1837 and the birth of Emory College were contemporary events. Consequently the first years of Emory's history were fraught with difficulties. President Few resigned after five years and was succeeded by Judge A. B. Longstreet, an eminent Georgia lawyer. Meanwhile another Methodist venture in education to which Florida Methodists were parties was launched in the Georgia Female College in Macon, Georgia. Elijah Sinclair, one of the first Florida preachers, was appointed agent in 1836 for this pioneer venture in the higher education of women. This college, renamed Wesleyan College, is even now a part of Florida Methodism's educational property, being administered jointly by the Florida Conference with the two conferences in Georgia, as was Emory College until well along in the twentieth century.

Florida Methodists were not slow in utilizing their newly established schools. Scarcely had the doors of the three schools opened before the wealthier Methodist families of Middle Florida availed themselves of these privileges which were unavailable anywhere in Florida. Florida Methodists patronized their colleges in Georgia as liberally as the stringent financial conditions permitted. Judge David L. White, Sr., of Quincy, for example, sent his son Pleasant Woodson White to the manual labor school at Covington in 1839, while the following year Pleasant Woodson was enrolled in



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Emory and another son, Charles, was at the labor school. Judge White had one or two children enrolled in these schools for a number of years. Pleasant Woodson White was graduated from Emory with high honors in the spring of 1844 and during the Civil War distinguished himself as Confederate Commissary Agent for Florida and later served on the bench. The experiences of the White family are but typical of those of many Florida Methodist families seeking educational opportunities for their children, for, as has already been noted, the educational facilities afforded by territorial Florida were about as meager at the end as they were at the beginning of the period.

## INDIANS ON THE WARPATH

The decade from 1835 to the admission of Florida to the Union and the organization of the Florida Conference is characterized by several momentous events. First and foremost of these is the Indian or Seminole War beginning with the Indian uprisings of the closing days of 1835. The relationships of the white men, Spanish, French, English, and American, with the Indians in Florida is a long, sometimes sordid, story. For the purposes of this narrative it is sufficient to say that after treaty making, intrigue, apparent cooperation, and mismanagement of one kind and another, the Indian difficulties flamed forth on December 28, 1835. On this day, the Indian agent, General Wiley Thompson, and a lieutenant of the United States Army were murdered some three hundred yards from Fort King. On this self-same day Major Francis L. Dade and two companies of regular troops moving up from Fort

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Brooke to Fort King to strengthen the latter were attacked and massacred to a man except for two badly wounded privates.

Three days later, on the bank of the Withlachoochee River, the Indians attacked the forces under General Duncan L. Clinch, who was in command of all the Florida troops. Most of the Florida volunteer militia under General R. K. Call, which made up a part of General Clinch's command, refused to take part in the engagement, and whether this was the cause or not will never be known, but the Indians were not defeated. From this beginning, hostilities became general and raged on for more than a year. In the spring of 1837 the Indians agreed to negotiate and in a meeting at Fort Dade in March, 1837, consented to being transported to the West. On the eve of their embarkation from Tampa Bay most of the Indians fled to the swamps and the war had to be started all over again. Recurrent war, devastation, and negotiations then lasted until 1842, when the war was finally concluded. On August 14, 1842, the war was declared finished and in January, 1844, the Office of Indian Affairs announced that 3,824 Indians and Negroes had been moved to Arkansas and that only about three hundred remained in Florida.

The development of Florida in many areas, especially economic, social, and religious, was seriously retarded, and in many instances the progress of years was utterly destroyed. Many a settler of substance was reduced by a single stroke to want and ruin. Towns just starting were cut down and settlers not only failed to come but many left and returned to their homes in the more peaceful states to the northward. In East Florida, which

bore the brunt of the Indian attacks, many preaching appointments were abandoned because most of the nearby settlers had migrated and those who were left were afraid to assemble for services. In some instances the Indians actually attacked the worshipers while they were in service, and not infrequently did a preacher or parishioner return home from the service to find his home laid waste.

Little was ever done to actually compensate the settlers for their losses occasioned by the war, though federal aid of a kind was not lacking. As one means of inducing settlers to return to Florida, Congress did pass the Armed Occupation Act in 1842 in an effort to induce settlers to go into what had been the area of hostilities. This measure provided for the gift of one hundred and sixty acres of land to those who would maintain a five years' residence in the area and undertake to defend it from attack. Homesteads under this act had to be south of the line separating townships nine and ten, which means that the line ran east and west about three miles north of Palatka and about ten miles south of Newnansville. Claims had to be filed within the year preceding August 4, 1843. Most of the settlements were in the Alachua country, the permits for this region being issued in Newnansville, where some nine hundred were granted, at least a third of which were for locations within a radius of twenty miles of Fort King [Ocala]. Another large settlement was made around Fort Cross [near modern Brooksville], while smaller settlements were made near Fort Fanning on the lower Suwannee, around Hillsborough Bay, and south of the Manatee River. The increase in population in

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this region is reflected in the rapid expansion of circuits thereabouts and the establishment of an enlarged Newnansville District in 1844 in which such circuits as Chuckachatee, Camp King, and Ocean Pond appear for the first time. Other permits under the act were issued in St. Augustine, but less than a third as many as were issued in Newnansville came from this office and they covered scattered settlements, generally near the coast, extending from Palatka to the Miami River and Bay Biscayne. The settlements in this lower east coast area were quite small and it was some years before the Methodist circuit riders invaded this region.

## EXPANDING HORIZONS

Hardly as deadly as the Indian difficulties but almost as devastating, and undoubtedly a greater hindrance to the development of Florida, was the general financial panic of 1837 which was accentuated in Florida by the failure of the far-flung scheme of "wildcat" banks, one of which had a capital of \$3,000,000. This, together with the increasing agitation for statehood and the resulting St. Joseph's constitutional convention, the freeze of 1835, the yellow fever epidemic of 1841, ventures in canals and railroads, the establishment of newspapers, "boom" towns, and growing pains in general characterized the later territorial years.

These developments in the culture of the territory are all reflected in the life of the churches, especially the Methodist church. Such things as a temporary decline in membership coming from the Indian troubles, curtailed financial offerings due to the panic, recurrent demands for a separate Florida Conference, the founding

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of a church paper, called the *Southern Christian Advocate* (published in South Carolina for that state, Georgia, and Florida), the appearance in the list of appointments of such names as Jacksonville, Madison, Monticello, Newnansville, St. Joseph, and Apalachicola, all indicate that the church was closely attuned to the developments of the time.

In the late thirties, Port Leon was begun on the low, marshy east bank of the St. Marks River, about a mile south of St. Marks. When Port Leon, after a short-lived threat to rival St. Marks, was wiped out by a hurricane and tidal wave in September, 1843, the inhabitants moved further inland and started the town of Newport. St. Marks became the port of the entire Tallahassee country and as early as 1837, if not earlier, a railroad connected the capital with the port, which in one year alone, October 1, 1837, to October 1, 1838, exported twenty-eight thousand bales of cotton. Apalachicola, about sixty-five miles southwest of Tallahassee, was another important center from which it is reported that more than fifty thousand bales of cotton were shipped during the same period. This was perhaps the most important commercial town of the period, but it had two things of which it was afraid, one was the railroads which were building terminals elsewhere, and the other was the town of St. Joseph. The first turned out to be far more deadly, but the latter was the more hated and feared.

St. Joseph was situated on St. Joseph's Bay, about thirty miles northwest of Apalachicola, and of the towns born during this period there is far more romance attached here than anywhere else. Unromantic enough,

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however, had been the reason for the beginning of the town, that being involved with clouded land titles of Apalachicola. Rather than come to terms with the Apalachicola Land Company, many of the inhabitants moved in 1835 about twenty-five miles away to the shore of St. Joseph's Bay and here started a town designed to compete with and possibly wreck the enterprising town of Apalachicola. For a time St. Joseph appeared destined to accomplish the object for which it was projected, succeeding in 1836 in having the Legislative Council move the location of the county seat of Franklin there from Apalachicola only to have Congress prohibit the change. Thwarted in this effort, St. Joseph succeeded two years later in being chosen the county seat of the newly created county of Calhoun. Two short railroads were built into St. Joseph to aid in the diversion of commerce, rivalry between the two towns was most acute from 1837 to 1839, being manifest largely in their respective newspapers.

The greatest triumph of the new city on the bay of St. Joseph's came, however, when the Legislative Council chose the city as the seat of the constitutional convention. Here representatives met on December 3, 1838, from all parts of the territory to frame a constitution preparatory to Florida's assuming the role of a state in the Union. One of the chief characters in the drama of the rise of St. Joseph was the son of a Methodist minister to whom reference has already been made in the section on education, Peter W. Gautier. His son, named for him, was one of the most brilliant Florida newspapermen of this period. He moved to Apalachicola in 1836, but later in the same year moved to St. Joseph,



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where he published the *St. Joseph Telegraph*, soon named the *St. Joseph Times*, from 1836 to 1841. It was the younger Gautier, who as a member of the Legislative Council, was primarily responsible for having his city designated as the convening place of the convention. Commercial decline in the new city set in shortly before 1840, the natural advantages of the parent city being too great for this "boom" town to overcome, a yellow fever epidemic there in the summer of 1841, followed by a violent hurricane in September, virtually ended the most ambitious building scheme of territorial days. During its short place in the sun, St. Joseph was served by several Methodist ministers, among them W. W. Bell and Peter Haskew. The work there was usually combined with that in Apalachicola, and the ministers were assigned by the Alabama Conference rather than the Georgia, since the area was west of the Apalachicola River, the dividing line between the conferences.

The Methodists did not stop with making St. Joseph itself a part of their rapidly expanding system, but did almost as much for its famous convention. All of it unofficial, of course, as far as the Methodist church was concerned, but none the less indicative of the place of many Methodists in territorial Florida. When the convention first convened, it was opened with prayer by none other than Peter W. Gautier, the Methodist preacher-father of the enterprising promoter of St. Joseph. The elder Gautier performed this rite quite frequently for the convention, but on one occasion David L. White, brother of Pleasant Woodson White of Quincy, a member of the Georgia Conference, was present and offered the prayer. On at least one other



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occasion still another clergyman was present and opened the session of the convention. When the secretary of the convention was elected, he was none other than the former pastor of the Tallahassee Methodist church, Joshua Knowles; Knowles had served the Tallahassee church during the year 1836 and near the close of that year had purchased the printing outfit of a local newspaper and begun the publication of the *Florida Watchman*. Consequently, it was as editor rather than preacher that he was chosen secretary. In addition to supplying the minister to invoke the blessings of the deity upon the convention, the secretary to keep its records, the local Methodist church building afforded a meeting place for sections of the convention, if, indeed, not for some of the general session. In due time the constitution was completed and later adopted by an extremely small majority in a territory-wide vote, and ultimately became the fundamental law of the new state in 1845.

Since repeated reference has been made to editors like the younger Gautier and Joshua Knowles, attention should be called to territorial journalism and the Methodist relationship thereto.<sup>5</sup> As with education, the history of Florida Methodist journalism begins in a nearby state, this time South Carolina. The General Conference of 1836 authorized the publication of a paper for the three states, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, and elected William Capers as its editor. This new paper, styled the *Southern Christian Advocate*, was published in Charleston, South Carolina, and made its initial appearance on June 24, 1837. It remained the official paper of Florida Methodism until the founding

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in 1878 of the *Wesleyan Christian Advocate* for Georgia and Florida. The Florida Conference ultimately established a paper of its own, called the *Florida Christian Advocate*, in 1886.

The newly established Advocate of 1837 attained a limited circulation of its own in Florida but covered a much wider circle by the manner in which it was copied by the territorial newspapers, of which there was quite a large number. (At least forty-four newspapers were established during the territorial period, though, of course, nothing like this number was ever in operation at any one time.) The power of the Florida "Methodist press" of the territory lay, however, not in its own paper, but rather in the editorships of some of the newspapers. Gautier has already been mentioned and many others might be singled out, but the Tallahassee Methodist triumvirate of Joshua Knowles, Samuel S. Sibley, and Charles E. Dyke stands unequalled in both journalistic and church circles.

Knowles "served the church and the state," as he frequently wrote, during an adult career of more than fifty years. Knowles was licensed to preach in 1833 and in 1836 was assigned to the pastorate of the Methodist church in Tallahassee. In the fall of 1836 he purchased the equipment of the short-lived *Florida Intelligencer* and began the publication in the capital of the *Florida Watchman*. Shortly after beginning this venture in journalism he severed his relationship with the Georgia Conference, of which all Florida was still a part, and settled in Tallahassee. Though he was no longer a traveling minister, his relationship with the church was far from ended and his name appears quite frequently

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in the records of the Tallahassee church. In 1839 he moved to Quincy and established the *Quincy Sentinel*, which he moved to Tallahassee in 1841 and renamed the *Florida Sentinel*. In 1844 he reentered the Methodist itinerancy and was assigned to Darien, Georgia. When the Florida Conference was set off from the Georgia in 1845 he was in the Georgia portion, and consequently never served again in Florida. His Georgia career took him again into the publishing field and later into the ministry of the Episcopal Church. He was an excellent newspaperman as well as minister, and the appreciation of his interest in public problems is manifested in his election as secretary of the constitutional convention of 1838-1839 and in his election to the house of representatives of the Legislative Council of 1843.

Sibley, holding no public offices, was a man of considerable influence. He was publisher of the Tallahassee *Floridian*, with but a brief interruption in 1841, for more than a decade following his first relationship with it in 1837. Under his guidance, the *Floridian* became one of the most powerful papers in Florida. Meanwhile, Sibley was of much value in the local Methodist Church, being licensed as an "exhorter" on June 12, 1841, and later serving for some years as the superintendent of the Sunday School.

Towering above all editors of Florida is Charles E. Dyke, but how close the press came to losing him to Methodist circuit-rider ranks is known to but few. While most of his service to Florida lies in the period beyond the territorial days during the turbulent days of secession and Reconstruction, Dyke nevertheless moved

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to Tallahassee before the coming of statehood and was employed in the office of the *Floridian* during its Sibley regime. Sometime between December, 1846, when he was recommended, and February, 1847, when the annual conference met, Dyke decided finally to cast his lot with the press instead of the pulpit. On December 5, 1846, he was examined in the Methodist quarterly conference on the doctrines of "the depravity of man, also the atonement, repentance, faith, justification, regeneration, and sanctification," after which he was licensed as a local preacher and recommended to the Florida Conference for admission as an itinerant minister. By the time that conference was held in Quincy three months later, Dyke had decided in favor of purchasing the *Floridian* and he was not among those applying for admission. However, he did remain a local preacher in the Tallahassee church for years and on many occasions filled its pulpit.

Besides the regular circuit appointments of the Methodist preachers and the influence of both the church and secular press, one other instrument of influence in territorial Florida should be mentioned, the camp meetings of Middle Florida and southern Georgia. These meetings became increasingly important in spreading Methodism throughout Florida, and the columns of the newspapers abound with notices of the approaching annual gatherings. In many instances visitors from remote parts of the territory chanced to attend these meetings, returning home to organize Methodist societies as a result of their camp-meeting experiences. Many of the camp meetings were held annually for years, some continuing to the present day.

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The year 1844 found Florida and Florida Methodism, alike, on the threshold of an independent maturity, and while the years did not hold exactly the fortune for



CAMP MEETING

either that might have been desired, each looked forward hopefully. At the outset of the territorial period each had two units of administration, the territory two counties, the Methodists two circuits. Through nearly a quarter of a century these units were divided and redivided, until 1845 found the state just short of thirty counties and the Methodists with slightly more than thirty circuits, some of them, of course, in West Florida. Missionary Methodism had been conditioned by territorial Florida, but militant Methodism was making a contribution to an evolving Florida culture.

## CHAPTER II

### WIDENING THE LONG TRAIL

THE period from the close of the Seminole War to the close of the Civil War forms a distinct era alike in the history of Florida and in the history of Florida Methodism. With the Indian difficulty behind and a fairly satisfactory recovery from financial disasters, renewed efforts were made to have Florida admitted to the Union as a state, and among the Methodists efforts were revived for making Florida into a separate conference. Scarcely had these two goals been achieved when life in Florida was again disturbed by war, this time the Mexican campaign. The Mexican War over, state and church alike began to face the same problems: expansion, slavery, and ignorance. Secession had already triumphed in the Methodist and Baptist churches, and, following the Compromise of 1850, Florida began to consider the possibility of severing the ties she had so recently established with the Union. The need for greater educational opportunities was apparent and here again Florida Methodists and Florida political leaders worked along parallel paths. Here, as in the matter of secession, the church was first. A movement to secure an educational institution was launched at the first session of the Florida Conference in 1845 but it was not until 1848 that the Florida Conference was able to establish its first school, and that, strangely enough, not



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in Florida but just across the boundary in Georgia. This first school was called Fletcher Institute and was located at Thomasville, Georgia. A second school, the East Florida Seminary at Micanopy, was founded by the Florida Methodists in 1852. Meanwhile the state school fund was being supplemented, and in 1851 the Assembly provided for two state seminaries of learning. These were established during the next few years. The Civil War brought similar problems to Florida and to Florida Methodism, as did the peace that followed.

### A FLORIDA CONFERENCE AT LAST

Congressional consideration in 1843 of the possibility of admitting Wisconsin and Iowa as well as Florida to the Union rekindled the Florida Methodists' hopes of having Florida constituted as a separate conference of the Methodist church. Florida had been attached to the Georgia Conference since it was set apart from the South Carolina Conference in 1830-1831. As the work in Georgia had expanded, the work in Florida had become more and more differentiated, with the Florida appointments largely rotating within the same group of ministers. The argument was advanced that if Florida had progressed sufficiently to be organized as a state, then she had advanced sufficiently to deserve a conference of her own. In addition to the common interests of the Florida churches as distinguished from those of Georgia, one other reason for a separate organization which was commonly advanced was the difficulty in attending the annual sessions of the Georgia Conference. These sessions were always held in Georgia, some-



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times as far away as Columbus, Milledgeville, or Eaton-ton.

With these considerations in mind, the Tallahassee church, at the session of its quarterly conference on November 6, 1843, passed a resolution asking the next session of the Georgia Conference to request the General Conference of 1844 to set apart its southernmost work in a new conference to be called "The Florida Conference." Similar requests came from other churches in Florida and the Georgia Conference in session in Columbus, Georgia, in January, 1844, made the desired request of the General Conference.

The General Conference of 1844 created the Florida Conference and fixed as its bounds all of Florida east of the Apalachicola River together with a portion of south Georgia.<sup>1</sup> This General Conference of 1844 is best remembered as the one which took the action in regard to slavery which led to the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church into two separate churches. The whole discussion over slavery had been injected into the General Conference because during the quadrennium since the conference of 1840 Bishop James O. Andrew had married a second time and, through his wife, had come to be legally an owner of slaves. After prolonged debate the Northern delegates pushed through a resolution which held that Bishop Andrew should "desist from the exercise of this office so long as this impediment remains." Nothing was said about other Methodists in the same situation of whom it was declared that there were two hundred traveling preachers with sixteen hundred slaves and about twenty-five thousand members with more than two hundred thou-

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sand more. Though no action was taken except in the case of Bishop Andrew, it was clear that this was enough and that the church had come to the parting of the ways.

The Southern delegates entered their protest against the action of the conference in the case of Bishop Andrew and closed it with an expression of hope that if the minority found it necessary to separate, that it could be done with justice to all sections. Accordingly, on June 7, 1844, the conference adopted a report which has come to be known as the Plan of Separation. On the very day the General Conference was adopting this Plan of Separation in New York, the original bill to admit Florida as a state was being reported to the House of Representatives in Washington. This bill had several objectionable features and was tabled.

The day following the adjournment of the General Conference the Southern delegates convened in New York and drew up an address to the members of the Southern conferences, of which the Florida would be one as soon as it could be organized. After reviewing what had taken place at the conference, especially in regard to the Plan of Separation, they suggested the calling of a convention to meet in Louisville, Kentucky, on May 1, 1845, to be composed of delegates from the Southern conferences, one for every seven members.

Under the gathering clouds of the slavery storm in 1844, then, the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was created. The men who were to compose the Florida Conference met with the Georgia Conference for the last time when it convened on January 18, 1845, in Eatonton, Georgia. Bishop Joshua

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Soule, who had presided at the preceding conference, was in charge of the conference. Bishop Soule, though born in Maine, and Bishop Andrew later became the first bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Following the Eatonton meeting of the Georgia Conference, Bishop Soule and thirty-two preachers who had not received Georgia appointments set out for Tallahassee to hold the first session of the Florida Conference.

### ORGANIZING FOR HER TASK

The Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church convened for the first time on Thursday, February 6, 1845, in the Methodist church in Tallahassee. The Tallahassee of February, 1845, was a small city of about two thousand inhabitants, of whom almost half were slaves. Tallahassee had but recently suffered a quite destructive fire and had not fully recovered therefrom. Physical deprivations did not cool her spirit though, for the capital city was alive with interest in behalf of the admission of Florida to the Union. The Legislative Council had just passed a resolution urging the admission of Florida to balance the admission of Iowa. Spirited campaigns for nomination to the anticipated offices were under way and on the day following the adjournment of the conference the House of Representatives passed the bill for the admission of Florida and Iowa. Three weeks later, on the last day of the administration of John Tyler, March 3, 1845, the law by which Florida became a state was signed.

Against this background, Florida Methodism met to organize for her task of reaching and ministering to the peninsula. This was the only session of the Florida

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Conference to meet as a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Just as Florida was a little later to have to ponder the question of breaking long sought and now hard won ties with the Union, the first problem for the young conference, a mere infant itself and likewise young in the age of its members, was to determine its course in regard to the convention to meet in Louisville the first day of the following May. The junior agent of the Methodist Book Concern in New York was present and preached what was described as a "grand sermon, which the whole assembly applauded." In the sermon, Tippet, the visiting agent, voiced the hope that the church would not divide, but the Florida Conference, with the same show of unanimity that had characterized the actions of the other conferences, voted to adhere to the Southern group and to send delegates to the Louisville Convention. Peyton P. Smith, the presiding elder of the Tallahassee District, was elected as one of the delegates to the convention. Smith was likewise named secretary of the Florida Conference, a position to which he was reelected sixteen times.

Thirty-two men had accompanied Bishop Soule to Tallahassee, and this group, supplemented by two others who were received on trial at the initial session, but similarly decreased by two who were transferred to other conferences, constituted the force with which the Methodist church set out to evangelize all of Florida and a large part of Georgia.<sup>2</sup> Thirty-two young men, most of them in their twenties and at least one not out of his teens, together with those described as the "older preachers," those on whom the burdens of the presiding eldership were placed, were in their early thirties.

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Of the thirty-four men under the supervision of the first conference, only twenty-two were actually members of the conference, the remainder having the relationship of "on trial." Those in full membership in the conference were, Reuben H. Luckey, Thomas W. Cooper, John Slade, Peyton P. Smith, Robert H. Howren, Anderson Peeler, John W. Yarbrough, William W. Griffin, Thomas C. Benning, Andrew J. Devours, John J. Richards, Alexander Martin, and Simon P. Richardson, these being the thirteen ordained elders, the last two being ordained during the session of the conference; E. L. T. Blake, N. R. Fleming, John Penny, John N. Miner, Gideon A. Mallette, Joseph T. Smith, Augustus D. Russell, John W. Mills, and James Harris, these with the exception of the last three named, being the ones admitted into full connection with the conference and ordained as deacons during this session.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these twenty-two, the following five had been admitted on trial previously: John M. Milner, Francis A. Johnson, Alexander Graham, David L. White, and Seaborn J. Childs, and the following were admitted on trial at the Tallahassee session: George W. Pratt, John C. Ley, James M. N. Lowe, Joshua Carraway, Reuben A. Griffin, George C. Clarke, and John H. Bryant.

Besides the tasks of organization and action on the pending proposal to ally with the Southern conferences, the new conference devoted its attention to at least four other items of great concern. The first of these had to do with forming a legal corporation to administer the conference fund for supplementing the incomes of the preachers and widows. The corporation was styled

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"The Preachers Aid Society of the Florida Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church" and its charter was granted to seven trustees, all conference members, by the Legislative Council of the territory of Florida on February 17, 1845. By the terms of the charter these trustees were empowered to collect funds "for the express and only purpose of being distributed among the preachers deficient in their quarterage. . . . and the widows and orphans of traveling preachers according to the regulations provided for such distribution by the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

The second action looking to the common welfare of the members of the group was taken by the formation of a corporation called the "Trustees of the Fund of Special Relief." The first corporation had only powers granted by the discipline of the church, but this one had broad discretionary powers to grant assistance in cases of special distress. The charter provided the following powers to the seven trustees: "They shall have power and authority to grant relief to distressed travelling and local preachers; the widows and orphans of such preachers as may have died in full connection in the Methodist Episcopal Church; also to grant relief to any extraordinary cases of Preachers in said Church, such as long family affliction, loss of all his cattle or horses, burning of houses, loss of crops, arrest for debt; also they may extend relief to a widowed mother or helpless father of a preacher, who has no support or who may need more." This charter was likewise granted on February 17, 1845, and addition to bearing testimony to the spirit of brotherhood that char-

acterized the conference reveals that many of the ministers were dependent upon farming activities for a living and that sometimes their debts became so embarrassing that their creditors took legal action against them. While these two actions had been concerned with the welfare of the ministers, the two remaining concerns were of much greater import for the welfare of Florida. The first had to do with making provisions for better educational facilities for the youth of the conference and the second was the organization on Saturday evening, the eighth of February, of the Florida Conference Missionary Society. Each of these actions was of unusual importance and each is treated in a separate division. The missionary meeting is described in the following section, while the activity in behalf of education is described in the section "Paths of Learning."

### STOP THE COLLECTION

One of the greatest displays of missionary enthusiasm ever seen in Florida occurred during the meeting of the first conference. The service on Saturday evening, February the eighth, was designated as a missionary meeting. The object of the meeting was to organize the Florida Conference Missionary Society and to make plans for sending the gospel to the Negroes and "destitute whites" within the bounds of the conference. Considerable missionary enthusiasm had already been manifested by some of the stronger churches of Middle Florida. The Quincy church, for example, organized a missionary society in 1839 and in that year undertook to support a missionary to the Negroes, while in 1843 the same society appropriated a portion of its funds to



aid the Tallahassee church following the disastrous fire there in May and the remainder to support an unmarried preacher "in South Florida in such a place as considered most advisable."

With this knowledge of earlier missionary enthusiasm, the officials expected a good response, but they were not prepared for anything like what occurred. In keeping with Methodist procedure, an offering was taken for carrying out the purposes of the society. The offering met with such an unprecedented response, that before it had been concluded it proved embarrassing to those in charge of the meeting. While the offering was in progress, one member of the audience arose and proposed that anyone might be made a life member of the society upon the payment of ten dollars and thereupon offered to constitute Bishop Soule a life member. This proposal struck a hearty response and immediately people began to clamor, offering to make first one and another life members. In this manner Bishop James O. Andrew, Mrs. Andrew, Reverend H. B. Bascom, Reverend John Slade, and many others were honored with life membership in the Florida Conference Missionary Society at its initial session.

The designation of John Slade as a life member constituted one of the most dramatic moments of the entire evening and indeed of the whole conference session. Mr. Slade was one of the very first Methodist preachers in Florida but he had been forced by ill health to retire from the traveling connection in 1830 when he was forty years of age. He had retired to his Florida farm and rendered occasional services to the neighboring Methodist churches as a local preacher. When Slade

traveled over Florida, it was a part of the South Carolina Conference. The idea of a separate Florida Conference proved so intriguing to him that he could not resist the temptation to become a part of it, whereupon he resolved to leave the settled life of a farmer and re-enter the Methodist itinerancy. At the advanced age of fifty-five, he was re-admitted to the conference and rendered ten years of worthwhile service before his death in 1854.

While the missionary session was in progress Slade moved forward to address the gathering. As soon as he was recognized, several clamored for the privilege of making this man who is frequently referred to as the "Father of Methodism in Florida," a life member of the Missionary Society. The scene is best described by one who was present: "To crown the interest of this novel and exciting scene, just at this moment, a hoary-headed man of plain and unpretending exterior was seen wending his way along the aisle of the church towards the altar. He was leaning, like Jacob, upon his staff; still there was something of elasticity about his step, the fire of his eye was still undimmed as he looked around him, a smile as of holy triumph played across his many features. Who was that time-honored one: it was the Reverend Mr. Slade, the first man who planted the standard of the Cross in Florida, when this fair land was a voiceless solitude. He it was, who, fired by the same zeal which still throws its unquenched halo around his declining years, left the abodes of civilization, to bear the glad tidings of the Gospel to the few straggling settlers who had penetrated the haunts of the red man in these Southern wilds; a pioneer bold,

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fearless, and strong in the Lord, who stood up in wigwam, in the low-roofed cottage or under the sheltering branches of some primeval oak and mingled the voice of praise and thanksgiving with the hoarse murmurings of the wilderness, the roaring of the distant waterfall, and the desert howlings of the Indian savage."

After this scene the meeting moved rapidly to a close. Those in charge had the officers of the society hastily elected and announced that the meeting was adjourned. This they did, they asserted, because the response had been so great that any "further demands upon the people would be discourteous to a generosity already so signally displayed." When the offering was counted it was found that approximately five hundred dollars had been contributed, which was but a few dollars short of the amount contributed at a similar meeting at the much larger Georgia Conference the previous month. Only seldom do Methodist offerings become so large that they embarrass the collectors.

## BISHOP JOSHUA SOULE

Guiding the Florida Conference through its initial session was one of the greatest bishops the Methodist Episcopal Church had ever produced, Joshua Soule. Bishop Soule, native of Maine, was sixty-three years of age at the time of the first session of the Florida Conference. He had been in the episcopacy twenty-one years and the Methodist itinerancy forty-six. Though much beyond the average span of years for a Methodist preacher of his day, Bishop Soule was at the very apex of his vigor when in Tallahassee and had more than a score of fruitful years ahead of him before his death

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in 1867. One contemporary account describes him as very erect, "and when he sat down he seemed taller than a man of six feet might be. He was even then a venerable man in everything which that term signifies."



JOSHUA SOULE

The Methodist Episcopal Church of 1844 had no more influential single figure than Bishop Soule, and he had held this high position for more than two decades. He was probably the most influential interpreter of Methodist law that the church has ever known. First elected bishop in 1820, he refused to be consecrated because the conference had adopted a resolution providing for the election of presiding elders. Soule resigned

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as a protest against the measure, which he thought unconstitutional, and even though the conference reconsidered its action, he refused to withdraw his resignation. The influence of Soule is all the more apparent when it is noted that more than two-thirds of the members of that conference favored the reform, but, as one writer phrased it, "when Joshua Soule uttered his veto he had the Conference at his feet."

Elected bishop again in 1824, and the objectional resolution no longer interfering, Soule accepted the office. By 1844 he was the senior bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He summoned all the prestige of his reputation as a legalist to withstand the action of the General Conference leveled against Bishop Andrew. He showed that the rule of the church against slave-owning officeholders applied only in states where emancipation was legally possible. As Bishop Andrew lived in Georgia, which did not permit the freeing of slaves, he was clearly within the letter of the law of the church. Moreover, the resolution seemed to Bishop Soule just another attempt to question the rights of a bishop, as well as an attempt to punish a bishop without due process of law.

Due to these reasons, when the Southern delegates at Louisville, Kentucky, in 1845, and at Petersburg, Virginia, in 1846, determined to sever relations with the larger body of a church which had deprived a bishop of the rights of his office over the slavery issue, Joshua Soule, son of Maine and resident of Ohio, cast his lot with them in the establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This new church, and the Florida Conference, each organized in 1845, owe much of the

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credit for their initial successes to the wisdom and guidance of this man. Never again did he preside over the sessions of the Florida Conference, but for more than twenty years he served the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, as its senior bishop.

### THE ROAD FROM TALLAHASSEE

Only once did the Florida Conference assemble as a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for before the session of 1846 the Louisville Convention had been held and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, organized. The final item of business of the first session of the Florida Conference was the reading of the assignments of the ministers. Bishop Soule had the responsibility of distributing as efficiently as possible the thirty-two preachers among the thirty-six circuits and stations between Albany, Georgia, and Key West, Florida, a distance of about six hundred miles, and from the Apalachicola to Brunswick and St. Marys, Georgia, an extent of approximately two hundred and fifty miles. The very magnitude and challenge before the Florida Conference led the venerable bishop to exclaim: "When I look over your vast territory and the needs of your work, I almost wish myself a young man and a member of the Florida Conference."

The area was divided into four districts, Quincy, Tallahassee, St. Marys, and Newnansville. Quincy and Tallahassee districts covered all of Middle Florida, together with the adjacent Georgia territory, and were under the supervision, respectively, of Reuben H. Luckey and Peyton P. Smith, presiding elders. This region had suffered less than the remainder of the territory



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during the Indian War and was the most prosperous part of Florida. It was here that Florida Methodism had most of its members, the number being almost



LOG CHURCH

double the membership of the other districts. This was the first time there had ever been a district designated as the Quincy, and even though it lasted only four years before it was merged with the Tallahassee, the contribution of Quincy to Florida Methodism has been considerable. The St. Marys district, with Thomas C. Benning as presiding elder, embraced the coastal region of northeast Florida and southeast Georgia.

The Newnansville district, with John W. Yarbrough the presiding elder in charge, was the great missionary district of the conference, extending from the Georgia



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line on the north to Key West on the south and from the Suwanne and Gulf on the west to St. Augustine and the Atlantic on the east. This was all of East Florida (i. e., all the territory east of the Suwannee), with the exception of the Jacksonville area. The presiding elder had six men with whom to cover this peninsula that constituted his district. With the exception of Key West, the Chuckachatee mission was the southernmost circuit of the district and consequently of the conference. The Chuckachatee mission embraced the now extinct Benton county and adjacent territory. Brooksville would be the modern center with the circuit extending out over the counties of Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, Sumter, and Lake. The previous year there had been a Hillsborough mission but it was not designated in the appointments of 1845.

Ocean Pond mission was located in the northern part of Newnansville district, covering most of the modern counties of Bradford, Columbia, Hamilton, and Suwannee in Florida, and a part of adjoining Georgia territory. John C. Ley, then only twenty-two years of age and just admitted on trial into the conference, was assigned to this vast undertaking. He recounts that there was no post office, church, or school building within the bounds of the circuit and that he received his mail at Newnansville each two weeks when he passed through. As the preaching appointments increased, the length of time required to cover the circuit increased and by mid-year he was reaching Newnansville only once each three weeks. Of church buildings there were none and of trails few. Ley traveled entirely on horseback using a

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pocket compass as a guide. His usual directions were given something like this: "Keep this direction for ten miles and you will strike an Indian trail, take the left-hand end and that will carry you in about five miles of the settlement you are seeking."

Since there were no church buildings, the settlers opened their cabins to Ley and invited the neighbors. The young minister had the satisfaction, however, of completing one church building during the year, this at Fort Call. Here he helped build a church of "pine poles and hewed puncheons for floor and seats."

### ST. AUGUSTINE MISSION

Simon Peter Richardson was another of the preachers sent to the Newnansville district in 1845. Just ordained an elder, he was sent to the St. Augustine mission. Methodism had made little progress in St. Augustine, though it was here that the first full time Methodist preacher in Florida, Joshua N. Glenn, had been sent in 1823. The number of members there had dropped to such a small number, eight white and thirty Negro, by 1836 that it was abandoned as a preaching appointment in that year; and Richardson was the first preacher assigned there in a decade. When Richardson arrived there he found exactly the same situation that faced Glenn more than a score of years earlier, no building and only one avowed Methodist member, in each instance a woman. Richardson discovered years later that many of those attending the Episcopal Church were still nominally Methodist, but since the Episcopal Church was the leading church of the city they would

not even admit their Methodist connections. The wife of one of the army officers, he learned, was the leading member of her Methodist church in Virginia and a local doctor was a licensed Methodist exhorter in the same state.

The Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians each had suitable church buildings, so Richardson determined to build one for the Methodists. No money was forthcoming locally, so the preacher set out to raise the funds as best he could. First he went to Charleston, South Carolina, by boat. There he was advised that the Methodist churches could give him no help. Failing to secure but ten dollars at a camp meeting, Richardson "took to the streets" of Charleston. He asked strangers on the streets for money daily until he collected more than two hundred and fifty dollars. From there he went to Columbia and Newberry, in South Carolina, and Augusta, Sparta, Milledgeville, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah, seeking funds. In several of these places he was paid for holding revivals, in others he solicited funds from all he met. In Savannah he raised over three hundred dollars from strangers on the streets. Returning to St. Augustine with more than fifteen hundred dollars, he contracted for the erection of the building. When his funds proved insufficient, Richardson took to the road and made a trip through Middle and West Florida and Alabama and raised an additional seven hundred dollars, this time largely through revivals and camp meetings. The building, constructed of shell rock, was completed, and at the end of the year seven white and thirty-seven Negro members were reported.

## WIDENING THE LONG TRAIL

### PATHS OF LEARNING

Florida Methodists had worked along by the side of Georgia Methodists in trying to supply the need for educational institutions for more than a decade, and by 1845 they had succeeded in establishing two creditable schools, Emory College at Oxford and Georgia Female College at Macon. While they remained legally and sentimentally a part of the conference, the boundary established when the Florida Conference was created left both of these schools within the bounds of the Georgia Conference, in spite of the fact that much of southern Georgia was in the Florida Conference.

Thus removed from two schools but so recently created after much travail, coupled with the dire need for educational institutions in Florida, it is not surprising that along with the division in the church and missions, education was one of the chief topics of interest at the Tallahassee conference of 1845. There was much sentiment among the preachers in favor of attempting to establish a school immediately, but the general economic condition (cotton was selling for less than six cents a pound), coupled with the memories of the recent struggle to establish the schools in Georgia finally deterred even the most ambitious from immediate action. Peyton P. Smith, the presiding elder of the Tallahassee district, was the leader in this initial movement for a school.

The projected school was discussed at the ensuing sessions of the conference but it was deemed inadvisable to begin operation until 1848. The site selected for the first venture of the Florida Conference in the field of education was Thomasville, Georgia; thus, again the history of Florida education turned to Georgia for a

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time. The school was named Fletcher Institute and in February, 1848, Peyton P. Smith of Tallahassee was named financial agent for the school. In May, 1848, the institute was incorporated with Peyton P. Smith of Tallahassee, Reuben H. Luckey of Quincy, William W. Griffin of Quincy, Gideon A. Mallette of Brunswick, Georgia, but formerly of Tallahassee and Monticello, and Ira L. Potter of Tallahassee, all preachers, together with four laymen, Hamilton W. Sharpe, Daniel Bird, James Kirksey, and William G. Ponder, as trustees.

Two large brick buildings were erected on the campus in Thomasville and the catalogue of 1851 shows the following faculty: William C. Hunt, principal; Belfield W. Cave, assistant; Reverend Reuben H. Luckey, principal of the female department; Miss Isabella Balbraith, assistant; and Mrs. Adeline R. Simmons, head of the music department. The institute remained the property of the Florida Conference for many years. In 1879 it became the South Georgia College and was a part of the Georgia University system until 1891, when it again became a private institution. The property was finally given to the city of Thomasville for the use of the public schools.

No sooner had Fletcher Institute been established than a movement was launched by Robert H. Howren for the establishment of a school in the southern portion of the Conference. This movement was contemporaneous with similar activity looking to the establishment of institutions of learning by the state. The legislature in 1851 finally passed an act providing for two seminaries of learning, one to be located east and one west of the Suwannee; the eastern seminary was

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established in Ocala and later moved to Gainesville, while the western school was established in Tallahassee. Before the state seminaries could be established, the Methodists succeeded in establishing one of their own in Micanopy, in 1852.<sup>4</sup> The East Florida Seminary, as it was called, should not be confused with the later state school of the same name, for they were entirely distinct institutions, though in 1856 the representative from Alachua County tried unsuccessfully to get the legislature to designate the Micanopy school as the state seminary east of the Suwannee River.

The Florida Conference in session in Tallahassee in January, 1852, designated John M. Hendry as the financial agent for the East Florida Seminary and elected the following board of trustees: Robert H. Howren, Thomas N. Gardner, Thomas W. Cooper, John M. Hendry, William M. Kennedy, W. J. Turner, George W. Boston, John Lewis and George E. McClellan. Howren was elected president of the trustees and retained this position until January, 1856, when an entirely new board was appointed. Besides whatever ability the financial agent might manifest, the only other asset of the new institution was forty acres of land in Micanopy given by Joel B. Smith of that place, which at the time was one of the largest and most promising towns in the southern part of Florida. Smith gave the land on the condition that it be appraised as worth twenty-five dollars per acre and that he receive the equivalent of the interest on the whole amount annually in tuition in the seminary. The trustees were free to dispose of the land as they saw fit but they were obligated to pay Smith his tuition-interest on the original valuation in



perpetuity. There was one condition which Smith reminded the board that must be contained in all titles disposing of the property, and that was a clause forbidding the sale of spirituous liquors thereon. All the deeds and leases executed by the trustees, many of which are still extant in the Alachua County records, contain this clause.

The trustees proceeded to discharge their duties immediately and directed that buildings be erected and teachers employed. Meanwhile, a charter was drawn and presented to the Legislature in December, 1852. By the provisions of the charter the trustees were to be constituted "a body corporate by the name and style of the East Florida Seminary." The board was to consist of nine members, five of whom were required to be "traveling preachers of the Florida Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South." The conference was to fill vacancies on the board among the preachers while the board itself replaced the laymen. The bill granting the charter was introduced in the Senate on December 15, 1852, and reported favorably by the Committee on Schools and Colleges a week later. Not only was it reported favorably but the committee appended this endorsement: "Your Committee cannot permit this occasion to pass without expressing their gratification at the desire thus manifested to establish a seminary of Learning in our State. Too much commendation cannot be given to the projectors of this school, and your Committee trust that this praiseworthy effort may meet with every encouragement that they desire for it."

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With such endorsement from the committee, the bill could hardly have failed to pass the Senate, but a ruling from the Attorney General that the bill had been improperly advertised nullified the bill but not the commendation of the committee. Early in January, 1853, the Legislature simplified the procedure for the incorporation of churches, schools under church sponsorship, and any similar enterprises by religious groups, and made the actual procedure conform to the constitutional authority. The new procedure required certain registration within the county where the institution was located and made unnecessary specific acts of incorporation by the Legislature. In order to provide for the legality of the acts of the Micanopy institution, since the charter had been ruled out by the Attorney General, the following section was added to the law: "Be it further enacted, that all the acts and proceedings of the persons who have acted as trustees on behalf of the contemplated East Florida Seminary, when acting in relation to said Seminary, are hereby declared to be as lawful and of the same force as if they had observed and complied with all the provisions of the acts for the incorporation of Academies and Seminaries of Learning."

Funds were not as readily secured as the trustees might have desired. The financial agent was forced to solicit many varied gifts, and on one occasion the seminary purchased a slave for one hundred dollars with the expectation of disposing of him for a considerable profit. This transaction is one of the most interesting of those recorded in the minutes of the trustees. The slave deal was recorded in this manner: "Brother Jno. M. Hendry

submitted a proposition from Brother Bernard to the Board, proposing to give to said Board of Trustees a Negro man valued at five hundred dollars, said Board paying Bro. Bernard one hundred dollars, upon which the following order was issued, viz., that Brother John M. Hendry, be and is hereby authorized to take said negro man, upon the conditions above stated, and dispose of him to the best advantage for East Florida Seminary."

John M. Hendry remained the financial agent until 1855, when the seminary was left without an agent. In 1856 an entirely new board of trustees was elected and Robert H. Howren, who had been president of the trustees since the beginning but no longer on the board, was named financial agent, while John C. Ley was elected president of the board. The school was in great financial difficulties, and in addition, due largely to the financial situation, the faculty failed to report for the opening of the school in the autumn of 1856. Ley was at the time presiding elder of the Jacksonville district. The board of trustees turned to him to save the school, electing Ley and his wife as the faculty. Ley in turn resigned from his district and moved to Micanopy. At the January session of the Florida Conference in 1857 Howren severed his connection with the school and, in addition to these duties, Ley was appointed financial agent, thus becoming principal, financial agent, and president of the board of trustees, and having his wife as the head of the "female department." Ley retained his relationship with the school, though his staff was soon augmented by the appointment of a financial agent and the election of additional teachers, for more

## WIDENING THE LONG TRAIL

than three years, finally resigning at the close of the year 1859 because of strife among the patrons. Like most other institutions, the Seminary was forced to close late in 1860 and after the war it passed to local ownership and was never again operated by the Methodists. While not the first educational venture of the Florida Methodists, the East Florida Seminary did have the distinction of being their first Florida institution, and furthermore, it antedates all other Florida educational institutions of similar rank.

### THE HURRICANE ROUTE: KEY WEST

Key West was the third city of the territory in 1840 but by 1850 it had become the first city of the state. Taking advantage of its natural situation, as most cities do, Key West had prospered on the disasters of others. Situated as it was, beyond the tip of the peninsula, Key West had a rich salvage business, that increased annually as commerce through the dangerous keys expanded.

The year 1844 marked the first time for Key West to appear in a list of Methodist appointments. No preacher was assigned that year, but Alexander Graham was sent the following year. In 1846 Simon Peter Richardson was transferred from St. Augustine, where he had just completed the erection of a church building, to Key West. The route to Key West was via sailing vessel from St. Marks, a distance of more than four hundred miles. Jesuits whom Richardson befriended on the vessel introduced him to many Catholic families in his new island parish, in which he was the only resident preacher of any denomination. The Methodists, of whom there were about fifty, were almost entirely

British Wesleyan Methodists who had reached the keys from the West Indies.

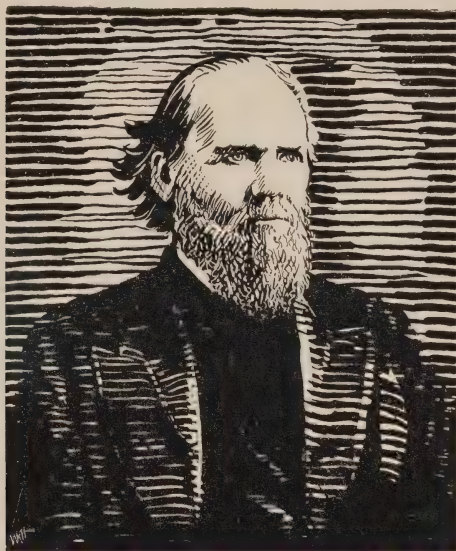
The little Methodist church soon proved entirely inadequate for the congregations. Richardson again, as in St. Augustine, undertook the erection of a church building. Soon, four thousand dollars was collected, and with this a handsome stone building was erected, only to be destroyed by a hurricane just as it was being covered. This storm in the autumn of 1846 was quite devastating, claiming many lives, and doing untold property damage. A temporary building was soon erected for Methodist services. Richardson was returned as the preacher for a second year in 1847, whereupon he determined to collect funds for the rebuilding of the Methodist Church, just as the Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Baptists were undertaking.

Recalling some of his experiences in collecting funds for the St. Augustine church, Richardson determined to make a trip up the Mississippi valley in quest of money for Key West. Reaching New Orleans by boat, he spent some time there "preaching and begging on the street," after which he visited Natchez, Vicksburg, Nashville, Memphis, St. Louis, and then started his return by way of Wheeling, Baltimore, Richmond, Norfolk, Wilmington, and Charleston. Everywhere he went, except Baltimore, the response was highly satisfactory but of his experiences Richardson wrote, "I have never known how I could collect money in the street as a stranger; it has always been a mystery to me." The trip lasted more than five months, but resulted in the collection of more than five thousand dollars, of which more than thirty-two hundred dollars was taken

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to Key West in gold, the remainder being expended for supplies in Charleston.

Against the advice of both the insurance agent and



SIMON PETER RICHARDSON

ship's captain, Richardson insured his cargo of lumber although it was only July and the hurricane season was several months away. So fearful was he that the ship might be wrecked, a copy of the order was left with the mill so that it could be easily duplicated in case of loss. The ship was entirely destroyed on the Florida reef. The mill refilled the order and, finally, by October, the building was completed and occupied.



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This was the third building Richardson had erected in Key West in less than two years, but so well did he build the last time, the building stood for nearly fifty years.

Not only did Richardson build a church in Key West, but he also added materially to the membership. By the time he ended his two-year pastorate there early in 1848 the membership of the Methodist Church had increased to 180. Methodism continued to flourish in Key West, and by 1856 the membership there numbered 276, and by 1860, 492 members and probationers were reported. By 1877 when John C. Ley was sent to Key West there were three thriving Methodist churches, each with its own pastor, and in 1886 when Robert H. Barnett became the pastor of the First Methodist Church of Key West he extended the services of the church to many of the upper keys.

## TREADING NEW TRAILS

Early in 1846, the state of Florida and the Florida Conference, now of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, each celebrated their first birthdays. During the next fifteen years they celebrated birthdays together and at each successive birthday took stock of their respective accomplishments for the year and made plans for the future. Slavery, the rights of the states, and the possibility of secession increasingly crept into conversation. Secession was no figure of speech to the Methodists for they had already quit talking about it as a possibility and had made it an actuality, as had the Baptists. Those who would send Florida on such a course received constant encouragement from the leaders of the Methodists,

and when the final steps were taken late in 1860 and early in 1861, the Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, and other religious groups of Florida gave not only their hearty endorsement but in some instances monetary support. This was one time when the pulpit was in the vanguard; and when the actual machinery of secession and, later, of confederation was set in operation it bore a striking resemblance to the procedure followed by some of the churches fifteen years earlier.

The growth in the number of Methodists in Florida in the years immediately following the organization of the Florida Conference was quite disappointing. Indeed, not only did the Methodists fail to increase but they actually decreased for several years. There was much yearly fluctuation, but it was not until 1850 that any increase whatever was shown over the 6,874 members reported in 1845. Even then the increase was so small that it amounted to only a little over 7 per cent,<sup>5</sup> while the increase in population for the entire state during this same five-year interval was more than 31 per cent.<sup>6</sup> In the decade between 1850 and 1860, however, the Methodist movement in Florida really came into its own, and grew at a much faster rate than the state. While the state was showing the remarkable increase of 61 per cent, the Methodists showed an increase of 90 per cent, with a total membership of 13,981 in 1860. However, over the whole period from 1845 to 1860 the church was behind in the percentage of increase, having 103.3 per cent, while the state had 111.3 per cent.

The Florida Conference met annually from 1845 to 1860, with five of its sessions held within its Georgia

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territory. The time of meeting was changed from the first of the year to December in 1853, with the result that in that year there was a session in Quincy in January and one in Monticello in December. This caused some confusion in the records, and as late as 1880 the published minutes of the conference omitted the Quincy session of 1853 entirely. Bishops James O. Andrew and William Capers were the most frequent presiding officers of the conference during this time, but on several occasions it was necessary for the conference to select one of its own members to preside because of the absence of a bishop.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, the successive annual reports indicate how relentlessly the Methodist circuit riders were following the trails into new settlements. Settlers were moving southward as fast as the territory was made safe from Indian attacks, and the yearly progress is nowhere better recorded than in the expanding Methodist appointments. Tampa Bay had been reached by the time the Florida Conference was organized, and the following year there were enough settlers in Orange County for that to be made into a circuit. Several years then elapsed before additional outpost circuits were needed, but in the meantime the settlements between Newnansville and Tampa Bay were being more thoroughly covered. For six years the Newnansville district remained the missionary district for the expanding settlements of south Florida, but in 1851 this district was abolished and in its place the Madison and Tampa districts were created. In this same year the Manatee circuit makes its appearance for the first time. The Tampa district then became the great missionary district, having by

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1857 at its northern extreme, circuits running all the way across the peninsula in Levy, Marion, and Volusia counties and extending southward to Manatee. Key West, in addition, was attached to the Tampa district.

The number of preachers available for appointment grew rapidly between 1846 and 1860, increasing from thirty-two in 1846 to eighty-two in 1860, with a corresponding increase in the number of circuits served. The doubling of the Methodist membership within the conference has already been noted. There was one area, however, in which the gains were not commensurate. This one was the financial. It was the custom each year to estimate the amount necessary "for the superannuated preachers, and the widows and orphans of preachers, and to make up the deficiencies of those who have not obtained their regular allowances on the circuits; and for the Bishops." The amount collected seldom equalled more than half the amount needed, and sometimes dropped as low as one-quarter. This meant that those dependent upon this fund, with the exception of the bishops, had to settle their claims for from twenty-five to fifty cents on the dollar promised. During its first two decades, the conference never made a very enviable report on its collections for this fund, though it should be noted that the annual contributions for "missions, sunday-schools, and tract societies" grew steadily.

The unsatisfactory state of the finances of the Florida Methodists led Simon Peter Richardson to write quite vehemently on the subject. When he was sent to the Tallahassee district as presiding elder in 1852 he found "in the midst of all this wealth and refinement there

was but one little shanty of a parsonage in the whole district, and that was on the Leon Circuit." Few of the preachers had been married before the fifties, so the absence of parsonages is not surprising, but beginning about 1850 more and more of the preachers were marrying. The state of affairs in the Tallahasee area led Richardson to write that the blame for the whole matter rested on John Wesley because of his "hobby of a free gospel." Richardson was further discouraged because in more than one hundred years the church had been unable to get rid of what he called, "Wesley's fanatical mistake."

In recognition of the steadily southward movement of the center of membership within the Florida Conference and because one of the conference schools was located there, the Florida Conference held its sixteenth session at Micanopy, in what was then considered southern Florida.<sup>8</sup> This session lasted from December 28, 1859, through January 3, 1860, with Bishop Hubbard H. Kavanaugh presiding. This was the last session to meet before the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, and already the possibility of a victory by the Republican party was crystallizing Florida's secession sentiment. Governor Madison Perry had already requested and received authority from the legislature to cooperate with any or all of the slaveholding states for the maintenance of their rights in the event of the election of a Republican president. During the spring of 1860 the reorganization of the militia became one of the major businesses of Florida and elections of militia officers were held in each community, and in many

instances Methodist preachers were chosen as officers, usually, though not always, as chaplains.

### THE FLIGHT FROM THE FLAG

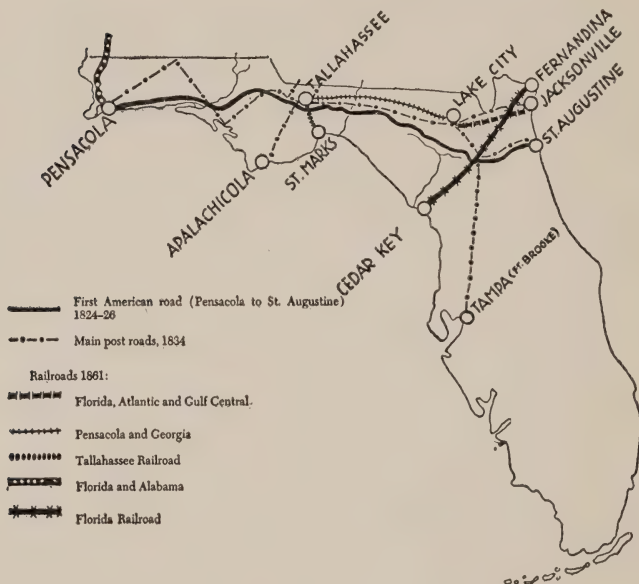
When the battle flag of the Confederacy was unfurled in 1861 it was at least the fifth flag to float over Florida. Spanish, French, British, and American flags had preceded it, but at each of these successive changes the total number of people affected was small. The change to the Confederate flag was different, though, for by this time the population of Florida had passed one hundred and forty thousand, and Florida was already taking on the complexities that go with a maturing culture.

When the Florida Conference met in its seventeenth session in Monticello on December 12, 1860, the conditions within the state and the nation were uppermost in all the discussions and deliberations. The conference met while a brief campaign for the election of delegates to the "secession convention" was being waged throughout the state. A bill calling for a constitutional convention to meet on January 3, 1861, was enacted on November 30, 1860. The election of delegates to the convention had been set for December 22. Against such a background as this it is not surprising that one contemporary wrote that the Monticello meeting accomplished but little and that "the church in all its operations sympathized with the excitement."

Florida shared in the fortunes of the Confederacy in accordance with her situation. Her location, thinly settled frontier population, and her vast coast line pretty well determined that her role in the war would demand



## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER



### EARLY TRANSPORTATION IN FLORIDA

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few battles, but would consist largely of supplying some men, but, of even greater importance, vast quantities of provisions, either of home production but more probably run through the blockade. Accordingly, blockade running and salt manufacturing became the great Florida enterprises of the Civil War. Various parts of Florida were under Union control between 1862 and 1865, and while it is true that no major engagements occurred within her bounds, Florida was spared few of the dis-

## WIDENING THE LONG TRAIL

asters and calamities of war, short of actual desolation.

Just as they had shared in the fortunes of peace, so the churches shared in the fortunes of war. Many churches were temporarily abandoned because of the disruption of community life during the war; many of the preachers went into the army, especially as chaplains, while the finances and membership of the churches suffered accordingly. In 1861 the total decline in church members amounted to 854 and no fewer than seven of the preachers were serving as chaplains, while the preacher in Key West was detained as a prisoner of war. The collections suffered heavily, declining more than a third in 1861 in contrast to 1860. The collection of \$846 in 1861, which was only about one-third of the amount sought, looks paltry beside the two hundred per cent return on the askings in 1863 until it is learned that the \$6,100.15 income was in Confederate money. Likewise, the \$8,134 received in 1864 when only \$3,160 was sought is also a reminder of the inflation of the time.

Forty-two per cent, or a total of 8,110, of all the members of the Methodist church in the Florida Conference in 1860 were Negroes. The Negro members in the Tallahassee district exceeded the white members by almost 500, while in the Madison and St. Johns (largely the old Newnansville) districts, the numbers were about equally divided, with a slight majority to the whites, while in the Tampa district the whites outnumbered the Negroes by more than two to one. The decline in the Negro membership began in 1863 and continued unabated throughout the next several years, leaving relatively few to be transferred to the Colored Methodist

Episcopal Church when it was organized in 1870 to take over the Negro membership of the former Methodist Episcopal Church, South.<sup>9</sup>

The white membership declined 1,888 or 17 per cent between 1860 and 1866, leaving the church in the latter year, including the huge loss of Negro members, with a total membership of almost exactly what it had been in 1856 and as late as 1886 the total membership within the state of Florida was about the same that it had been in 1860. The changing situation at the close of the war made it necessary to separate the Negro work entirely from the white, consequently all of the appointments of 1865 are double, there being appended after each usual appointment the words "and colored charge," indicating clearly that there was a distinct cleavage in the work that had been formerly united. The war had brought its problems, but the days ahead brought problems which made these difficulties pall into insignificance.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

THE close of the Civil War brought both Florida and Florida Methodism face to face with abrupt changes in living. Methodism's separation in 1844 and Florida's secession in 1861 were little more than passing excitements in comparison with the disruptions each suffered shortly after the conclusion of the war. Following the division of the Methodist Church, Florida Methodism had gone its own Florida way, and following secession the state had gone its way, beset of course with the disaster of war, but *its* way, none the less. For a brief time following 1865, each enjoyed a brief respite to prepare, perhaps, for the changes ahead.

The Federal government with its Freedmen's Bureau and the Methodist Episcopal Church [frequently referred to as the Northern Methodist Church] with its Freedmen's Aid Society soon appeared on the Florida scene to protect the Negroes, whose freedom itself was one of the first disruptions to the Florida way. In political circles, Florida went through more than a decade of nightmare at the hands of "strange new people." The Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was soon startled to learn that it was no longer "Florida Methodism," but that replacing its former unity and monopoly there were no less than

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

three new Methodisms, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. To these disruptions of the old Florida Methodist way should also be added three others, more congenial in nature but equally as divisive: the final divorcing of Georgia and Florida Methodism in 1866, the formation of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in 1870, and the organization of the Florida Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church in 1889.

The three and a half decades from the close of the Civil War to the end of the century witnessed vast changes in all the aspects of Florida life, especially political, economic, social, and religious. Paralleling the struggle for political rehabilitation went a similar effort for economic expansion and paralleling both went movements for moral and religious refreshment. The Florida that emerged toward the latter part of this period was a new Florida, a more cosmopolitan Florida in which the economy of the region from the Apalachicola to Suwannee no longer dominated, a Florida with improved transportation, expanding industries, and a population growing so rapidly that it increased nearly three-fold in the thirty-five years. Florida was well on its path away from the frontier; this was the period of enterprising capitalists like Hamilton Disston, Henry B. Plant, and Henry M. Flagler. Florida had faced the parting of the ways, startled and horror stricken, and though rough was the path, an apt pupil she proved, turning liabilities of the seventies into assets of the nineties.

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

### RECONSTRUCTING REBELS

Though removed from the main theater of action, Florida suffered much and her losses of life and property were high during the war ending with Lee's surrender at Appomattox early in April, 1865. A month later the Confederate forces in Florida surrendered to the Union commander in Tallahassee, and demobilization followed rapidly. General rehabilitation was the goal of most Floridians, but it was thwarted on every hand by confusion and poverty. Adding to the general disruption of the time, Florida's war governor, John Milton, committed suicide just eight days before Lee's surrender. Milton's successor, A. K. Allison, was never recognized by the Federal government and after little more than a ninety-day tenure he was displaced by an appointee of President Andrew Johnson. Allison and the two United States senators who formerly represented Florida were imprisoned for several months.

The provisional governor, Judge William Marvin, formerly the head of the admiralty court in Key West, held office under a semi-military regime until after the elections in the fall. Florida was outside the Union, so one of Marvin's first acts was to call a constitutional convention charged with the duty of revamping the fundamental law to meet the changed conditions. Elections for its members were held on October 10, and the convention opened for a twelve-day session on October 25, 1865. Among its chief actions, the convention rescinded the act of secession, repudiated the state debts, granted the Negro limited political and judicial rights, retained white political supremacy, and provided the



## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER



### DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN FLORIDA, 1860

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time for an election of the officers specified under the new constitution. The convention's work was, on the whole, quite praiseworthy and represented an honest facing of what appeared to most of the members none too pleasant facts; it was a conservative convention, yielding to "radicalism" only where necessary.

November 29 was the date set for the election of the new state officers. On the very day that a few Floridi-

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

ans, less than half the eight thousand qualified persons, were casting their ballots for an administration to guide them through the uncharted courses, the twenty-year-old Florida Conference was assembling in Madison to survey its status and make what plans it could for its own uncharted future. As it surveyed the situation it found that in contrast to the fall of 1860, it now had only fifty-seven preachers available instead of the eighty assigned five years earlier; only one preacher was admitted on trial instead of six; the membership had dropped from 19,286 to 16,463; and when it came to answering the usual question about contributions for missions, Sunday schools, and literature, the \$5,963.74 of the half-decade earlier had to be replaced with only \$964.25. This was the rather discouraging picture presented to the preachers as they assembled on that election day.

David S. Walker was elected to the governorship and assumed that office shortly afterwards, though the Florida constitution had not been accepted by the Federal government. Florida's government proceeded to function, pending action on the constitution. Meanwhile the Freedmen's Bureau was expanding operations within the state. This bureau had been established as a branch of the War Department to continue the program of assistance to the destitute, especially to the Negroes, which had been originally undertaken by the army. Thomas W. Osborn supervised the work in Florida through a number of sub-commissioners who were in charge of the various sub-districts into which the state was divided. The avowed purpose of the bureau was to care for "refugees, freedmen, and abandoned lands," but in actuality it was a kind of hybrid

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

organization, part civil, part military, not answerable to the state government, engaged in exploitation: exploitation of the whites in behalf of the Negroes economically and exploitation of the Negroes in behalf of the bureau politically.

Florida's partially restored civil government under Governor Walker functioned after a fashion until July, 1868, but at no time was it completely free of military interference. In spite of many difficulties, however, the state government made strides toward restoring stability and equilibrium in Florida, ratifying the Thirteenth Amendment and rejecting the Fourteenth, enacting a code to deal with problems created by the freeing of the Negroes, and electing ex-Governor Marvin and Wilkinson Call to the United States Senate. The senators tried unsuccessfully to claim their seats, the state constitution was rejected, and in March, 1867, the first of the reconstruction laws was passed by Congress. Preparations were soon made for the reorganization of Florida's civil government in conformance with the accepted pattern of Negro control. Under military reconstruction, Florida, along with Alabama and Georgia, constituted the third military district. A new registration was begun in July, 1867, a registration in which the number of qualified Negroes outnumbered the qualified whites.

In order to establish civil government a new constitution was necessary, consequently, following an election in November, a constitutional convention assembled in January, 1868, in Tallahassee, or rather in Tallahassee and Monticello, for there was discord from the outset. Of the forty-six delegates to the convention,

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

more than a third were Negroes, several of whom were preachers belonging to the Negro Methodist churches; and more than a third were recent Northerners adventuring in Florida, better known as "carpetbaggers" and "scalawags." After much discord and division, a constitution was finally drafted late in February and accepted by the electorate in May. The constitution was far more reasonable than the one first urged in the convention by the extremists though it did provide for a highly appointive system of officials, thus giving the party in control complete control of the state. On the progressive side, the constitution built the groundwork for a modern public school system.

Elections were held under the new constitution, ushering in eight years of rule in Florida by the Republican party. Harrison Reed was elected governor along with a legislature in which the Republicans were predominant and which included a considerable number of Negroes. Florida was restored to the Union in mid-summer, 1868, but the state Republican party was beset from the outset with discord and division, brought about by bickering among its white leaders and its dependence for strength on federal troops and Negro votes. The Republican discord grew and finally a Democrat was elected to the Senate in 1875 and in the popular election of 1876 the Democratic candidate for governor, George F. Drew, was elected, thus returning Florida to what was more nearly a "Florida way" than she had known for more than a decade. Triumph of the Democratic party did not mean the demise of the Republican, for the two still engaged in fierce duels for years. In spite of opposition, the Democrats won the elections

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

during the ensuing decade and in 1885 succeeded in calling a convention to rewrite the carpetbag constitution of 1868.

While this political struggle was extending over most of two decades, social and economic upheavals of equally as great intensity were progressing. The South's social revolution following the war brought with it an era of lawlessness, too frequently blamed on the Northern reconstructionists but actually carried on by Southern irreconcilables. Racial difficulties and political differences added to the intensity of the situation, leading finally to the organization of lawless groups to administer a measure of "law." Even before the social upheaval reached anything like an equilibrium, foundations of an improved economy were being started. The Democrats inherited a financially exploited Florida, along with the social and political problems. Rehabilitating of the state's bankrupt Internal Improvement Fund, reviving and projecting transportation facilities, chiefly railroads, and opening areas to settlement, were the chief economic problems facing the new government of 1877.

Before the end of a decade these problems had been met and pretty well solved. Hamilton Disston of Philadelphia bought enough South Florida lands to return the improvement fund to solvency and in developing this property helped solve another of the state's problems regarding the attraction of settlers. Railroad building was revived and by 1884 Henry B. Plant's trains were running from Jacksonville to Tampa, via Palatka and Sanford, and by 1886 Henry M. Flagler was launched on his railroad building career. Difficul-

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

ties were being solved and Florida's condition was improving; her population increased by a little more than 80 per cent between 1870 and 1885.

### NORTHERN CHURCHES MOVE SOUTH

Several denominations in the North during and after the Civil War were of the opinion that the military penetration of the South should be followed by a church penetration, so that the hard won victories of the first might be crowned by the godly work of the second. Foremost among the denominations committed to such a policy was the Methodist Episcopal Church. In this position it was supported by orders of the Secretary of War, who, in November, 1862, authorized that church to go into the Confederate states, hand on the heels of the invading army, and receive from the Union commanders all church buildings of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in which a loyal minister, who had been appointed by a loyal bishop, did not officiate. Several bishops of the church journeyed into the South, Bishop E. R. Ames making the longest tour, and during the last two years of the war a number of Northern preachers were sent into the South as missionaries. This invasion by their sister church was not without loud protest from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, leading one of its editors to write, "As the United States is trying to reduce the Southern States to territories, so the Methodist Church, North, is trying to reduce the Methodist Church, South, to the status of missions."

Following the war, not alone of the Northern churches, but still foremost in activity, the Methodist



Episcopal Church continued its policy of penetration of the South, now more dedicated to work among the Negroes, though by no means limiting its southern work exclusively to them. This work had already begun before the close of the war, but with the creation by the government of the Freedmen's Bureau, this work received great stimulation in the North. The Methodist Episcopal Church supplemented its existing facilities by the organization of the Freedmen's Aid Society to carry on most of its program of evangelism, education, and church building in the South. The northern churchmen recognized the necessity of the enactment of the congressional reconstruction policy if their program was to succeed and in the struggle between President Johnson, who opposed the law, and Congress, the churchmen, especially the Methodists, brought much pressure to bear against the President. Indeed, Bishop Matthew Simpson is accused of bringing his "clerical and church influence to bear" in order to bring about the conviction of Johnson. One missionary in the South wrote his church paper that if President Johnson's policy succeeded, "Union men, missionaries, and the teachers of freedmen" would be in danger, and that every church and school building established in the South would be destroyed, adding, "If Congress fail we fail: if Congress succeeds we succeed." In some areas the Methodist Episcopal Church was considered a kind of adjunct to the Republican party, their missionaries to the freedmen sometimes even accepting political offices.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, through its Freedmen's Aid Society, soon had not only many schools in operation but by 1869 had formed ten new annual con-

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ferences in the former slaveholding states, among both Negroes and whites. While there were both Georgia and Alabama conferences among this ten, there was no Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at that time, the work of that denomination in Florida having been handicapped from the outset by the greater preference of the Negroes for the African Methodist Episcopal Church and also by the fact that it failed to gain a hearing among the whites. It was not until 1873 that a Florida Conference was organized and it then numbered only a few members.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, while proposing to work among both whites and blacks, was far more successful in winning Negro members, having by 1871 in its ten southern conferences twice the number of whites. On the other hand, the outright Negro Methodist churches were far more successful in securing members of the race as members, as is shown from the fact that by 1890 they had more than ten times as many members in Florida as the Negro membership of the Northern Methodist church, having 38,715 to the latter's 3,683, though the ratio for the whole south was more nearly only three to one.

The church which made the greatest inroads in Florida among the Negro members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was the African Methodist Episcopal Church. There were 8,110 Negro Methodists in the Florida Conference of the Southern church in 1860; by 1866 only 3,935 remained; at the end of 1869 fewer than 500 remained. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, to which most of these members flocked, had been founded in Philadelphia in 1816 by

Negroes dissatisfied with discrimination against them.

The war had scarcely ended when seven ministers of this church met in Charleston to organize the South Carolina Conference, which was to include the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. At the close of the conference, William G. Steward received the sole assignment to Florida. Leaving immediately for his field of labor, Steward arrived in Jacksonville on June 9, 1865, and on the next day he organized a church at Midway, a settlement east of Jacksonville, with sixteen members. In the next few months he organized churches in the towns westward from Jacksonville, finally going as far as Marianna. Charles H. Pearce was soon sent to Florida to re-organize and expand the pioneer work. Pearce arrived in Jacksonville in February, 1866, where, with the aid of F. A. Branch of the local white Methodist church, he organized a church with sixty-four members. Later in the year he re-organized the church in Tallahassee, nearly all of its 116 charter members withdrawing from the Tallahassee Methodist church for the purpose of organizing the new church. The growth of the denomination was so encouraging that in June, 1867, the Florida Conference was organized in Tallahassee with a total membership of nearly five thousand and approximately thirty preachers.

The most potent force in the rapid spread of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Florida was the organizer already mentioned, Charles H. Pearce, who, though a presiding elder of the church, was always referred to by his fellow preachers as "Bishop" Pearce. During the reconstruction period when, unfortunately, the Negro churches became much involved in carpetbag

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politics, Pearce was quite an influential political figure within the state. The church buildings of the Negroes became meeting places for political gatherings, frequently under the leadership of the preachers, many of whom justified their political activity on the grounds that a minister "cannot do his whole duty except he look out for the political interests of his people." The significance of the Negro churches in politics is clearly manifested in the following letter from the first Republican governor of Florida to the Florida Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church assembled in annual session in Quincy:

EXECUTIVE MANSION, TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA  
JANUARY 4TH, 1870

SIR:—Would it be consistent with the arrangements of your Conference to adjourn your session to this place for a day or two? I should be glad to meet the representative men of a Church to which, perhaps, more than any other, is committed the responsibility of shaping the character and destiny, and controlling the interest of the race so long held in bondage, and so recently admitted to the rights and privileges of freemen, and clothed with the responsibility of citizenship. Please assure the members of your Conference of my interest in its work, and an earnest desire to co-operate in all things calculated to secure to all the benefits of true republican government. If it should please you to adjourn to this place, I would be glad to provide for you and your friends at my house during your session.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

HARRISON REED, *Governor of Florida*

TO JOHN M. BROWN, Bishop of Florida Annual  
Conference

Expansion of the African church was rapid and its development forms an important chapter in the development of Methodism in Florida. The church made several efforts in educational ventures, the most enduring and important of which is Edward Waters College in Jacksonville. The one conference of 1867 has grown until there are now seven conferences within the state; the 30 churches have grown to 510; and the fewer than 5,000 members have grown to 42,569.

Two other Negro Methodist churches shared the Methodist members, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church which had been formed in New York in 1820 and the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1870 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to take over the few Negro members who had not already withdrawn. Neither of these churches has ever made much progress in Florida, though the former organized a conference for the state in 1869. It has but sixty-nine churches at the present time, while the Colored Methodists have but seven churches. The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, as the creature of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had an amusing history in some regions during the reconstruction period, when, because of its rule against the use of its buildings for political gatherings, it was dubbed by the purely Negro churches as the "rebel church" or, not infrequently, the "Democratic church."

Thus there came to be four Methodist groups competing for the Florida Negro: The African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church. The develop-

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ment of Negro Methodism in Florida is a story in itself and cannot be told within the brief limits available here.

### REBUILDING OLD ROUTES

Realizing only that change was the order of the day, but of course unaware of the vast changes that would be wrought in the political, economic, social, and religious life in Florida during the next two decades, the old order Methodism of Florida faced the new year of 1866 and the years ahead full of anxiety. No General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had been held since 1858, so the first step in bringing all the churches out of their chaotic condition was a session of that conference in the spring of 1866. Many of its actions indirectly affected the Florida membership, but its one action most directly related to Florida was a provision for removing the Georgia portion of the conference, thereby leaving all of Florida east of the Apalachicola in a single conference bearing the name of the state. This geographical delimitation, with a few border adjustments, has remained the basis of the Florida Conference from 1866 to the present. The undivided conference met for the last time in Quincy, Florida, on December 13, 1866.

The Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, that assembled at Monticello on December 6, 1867, was downcast but not discouraged; here was a conference which at the start of 1861 had prided itself on a total membership, members, probationary members, and local preachers, of 19,286 now reduced, by division of territory and losses to the Negro churches, to

a mere shadow of its former self, with 6,266 members. The older preachers of the conference were reminded of the organizing session in Tallahassee twenty-three years earlier, for the number of preachers was almost exactly the same, there being but four more than the thirty-two of the earlier session, but there was a grim difference between the two meetings. At the first session Tallahassee was alive with excitement over Florida's impending admission to the Union. At the Monticello session of 1867 talk of admission to the Union was again the subject of discussion, but this time the future was dark and clouded. Shortly before leaving for the session of the conference, these preachers had witnessed the election of delegates to the carpetbag constitutional convention, an election in which most of them found themselves disfranchised. Events such as these served as a foreboding of the days of reconstruction and social revolution ahead. Small wonder that one contemporary described the conference session of 1867 as the "saddest and most dismal" in its history.

From Monticello the preachers of the Florida Conference went forth to their tasks of aiding in the rebuilding of Florida society. The state had been divided into four districts, Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Tampa, and Ocala, with James B. Jackson, William F. Easterling, William E. Collier, and Theophilus W. Moore, the presiding elders, respectively. Because of the shortage of preachers, many circuits were combined, and still others were left "to be supplied" whenever the presiding elder could find a suitable person. It should be noted in this connection that "supplies" did much valuable work in the spreading of Methodism over Florida but they have



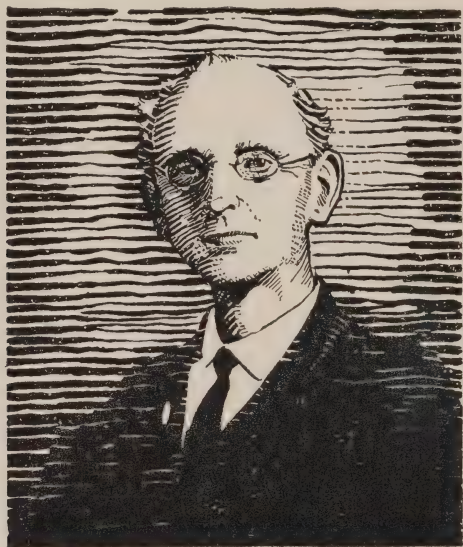
## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

received little recognition because most frequently their names were never entered in the official records. These supplies were usually "local preachers," a term used in Methodism to designate lay preachers not officially connected with the group of preachers subject to assignment by the conference, who conducted all of the services of the church except the administration of the communion. Methodism was introduced into many parts of Florida by these local preachers who usually supported themselves by week-day employment and preached on Sunday. Illustrative of this type of preacher is Levi Pearce, who was the founder of many Methodist churches in the Tampa Bay area during the Civil War and reconstruction periods, yet his name never appears in the records of the Florida Conference.

Florida's new constitution had been written and accepted, a new governor elected, and Florida had been restored to the Union by the time the Florida Conference convened in Jacksonville in January, 1869. Slight gains in the white membership were noted at this session, but the loss among the Negroes continued. Reports at the session in Lake City, in December, 1869, showed losses not only among the Negro members but also among the whites, reducing the white membership to a point below what it had been two years earlier. In 1870 the remnants of the Negro membership were transferred to the newly created Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. This virtually ended the direct relationship of long standing between the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, with the Negroes.

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

It was at the Lake City session of the conference in 1869 that Robert Howren Barnett was admitted on



ROBERT HOWREN BARNETT

trial, thus bringing into the conference the son of one of its members, Thomas R. Barnett, and the namesake of another, Robert Howren.<sup>1</sup> Howren was one of the original members of the Florida Conference, having been in the Georgia Conference prior to that for eight years, and Thomas R. Barnett had been a member for fifteen years when his son was admitted. The elder Barnett had another son, James S. Barnett, who was admitted on trial into the conference in 1886. Andrew A.

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Barnett had preceded his father, James S., into the conference in 1874. One of the sons of Robert Howren Barnett was admitted to the conference in 1903 and is still a member of the conference. Thus for ninety of the one hundred years of the conference the names of Thomas R. Barnett or his sons and grandsons have been on the rolls of the conference. Of these, Robert Howren Barnett alone was a member of the conference for sixty-six years. The aggregate years of service of the clan Barnett exceeds 175 years, and in the course of this work they have been known from the first not half so much as trail followers as trail blazers. While perhaps unequalled in span of service by any other family, there are other three-generation families of the conference, such as the Norton, which in five individuals has a combined service of more than 150 years, and perhaps others, and a host of two-generation ones, like the Ley, which has a combined service record of father and three sons of more than 150 years, likewise.

The diaries of the Barnetts, father and son, of 1870 reveal that the life of a circuit rider of that year was an arduous one. The following brief extract from the diary of the father reveals something of his life as he served the Sumter circuit of seven churches:

Monday, Jan. 3: Left for Sumter Circuit, traveled all day, camped 7 miles from Starke.

Tuesday, Jan. 4: Still traveling. Camped near Orange Creek.

Wednesday, Jan. 5: Still on the road, camped near Silver Springs.

Sunday, Jan. 9: Preached at Adamsville and Sumterville, stopped at Branch's.

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

Monday, Jan. 10: Went to Bro. Fletcher Williams, staid all nite.

Saturday, Feb. 5: 1st qr. meeting. Bro. DePass preached, tex on Prare. Stewards asest 400 dollars for our soport, 100 for the P. E. Colected 5 dollars, 4 for us and 1 for P. E. Next qr. meeting at Leesburg, April 2 & 3.

Sunday, March 20: at Stewart's Chapel: Preached again at same place. Tex Job 14c. 14v. Colected 2 dollars and 30c for the delegates to general conference. Red the rules. Went to B. Fusel's and staid all nite.

Meanwhile the son, Robert Howren, who was serving his first appointment covering all of Taylor and Lafayette counties and a portion of Madison, recorded the following experiences:

January 6: Held meeting at New Hope Church. Preached for the first time on the circuit from 2 Tim 4:2. Had a very good meeting.

January 7: Was at Cook's Hammock. Spent the day at Brother William Hankins, most in reading, meditating and praying. In the afternoon went to the Church and graveyard and into the grove, where I read, wrote and paged my diary. Prayed for the prosperity of the work and my success as a minister . . . . Read Shakespeare a little—did me no good, I think.

Jan. 30: Tried to preach at Maypop Church at 10 o'clock from 1 Tim. 1:15. Went with Mr. Sapp to dinner. Tried to preach at Troy from 2 Tim. 4:2. Congregation respectful, those that were in the house. Someone fired off a pistol near the house, while we were at first prayer.

Feb. 16: Went to Brother McDaniel's. Had quite a time losing and finding blazes on the 9 miles

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woods trip to Broth McDaniel's. Jumped a turkey.

• March 12: Morning rainy and windy. Ceased raining at 12 o'clock, and I started for my appointment (Friendship). I had tolerably good weather until I got so far as to decide to get to Uncle Bob. The rain and wind commenced four miles before I got there and stormed pretty hard. Dropped my saddle-bags in Enconfena. Got to the house in violent wind and rain.

April 13: Went to Monticello, left an appointment at Brother Savage's. Got lost in the afternoon, went four or five miles out of my way. Reached Monticello at dusk, put up at Mr. Frank Johnson's.

Aug. 2: Got up (at Mr. Tooten's,) at daybreak, left by the time I could see and rode 8 or 9 miles to Mr. Downing's to breakfast, and thence to Bethel and preached at 11 A. M., Acts 8:8. Had class meeting, considerable feeling. Went to Brother Singletary's to dinner and back to Brother Ramsey's and spent the night.

From 1870 to 1885 the task of rebuilding and pioneering proceeded at a remarkable rate. Great attention was given to reviving the shattered educational visions of the conference, as well as to expansion of the missionary program whereby new areas were opened up to Methodism. Districts were created and merged as the requirements of adequate supervision demanded, there being at various times during this period districts named Ocala, Live Oak, Gainesville, Leesburg, and Orlando, as well as those of long standing, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, and Tampa. For a brief time there was even a Key West district with such widely separated points as Key West, Bartow, Indian River Mission, and

Manatee Circuit. In 1877 recognition was again given to the fact that the course of Methodism in Florida was southward, when for the second time in its history the conference held its sessions south of the cities on the main route from Jacksonville to Tallahassee. The previous southern session of the Conference had been in Micanopy just before the Civil War; but the November, 1877, session went much farther south, this time to Tampa. It was not without much protest from the preachers stationed in the northern part of the conference that Tampa was chosen, and the difficulties encountered en route there would seem to indicate that the objections were not entirely invalid, for Tampa at that time was a very small town with no transportation facilities except the Gulf.

The Tampa session of 1877, however, was a signal recognition of the fact that henceforward the expansion of Florida population, and hence of Florida Methodism, would be in South Florida. That this was true is attested not only by the rapid growth in population and membership in that region but also by the fact that thereafter Gainesville, Ocala, Orlando, Leesburg, Bartow, and Palatka became hosts to the annual sessions quite as frequently as the towns across the northern part of the state. By 1885 the whole of this region had been very well populated, and the appointments of that year indicate that Methodist preachers were serving at many points unknown to the appointments of 1870. Among these were: Green Cove and Mandarin, Palatka, Fruitland, Sanford, Georgetown and Drayton Island, Orlando, Kissimmee, Apopka, Tavares, Wildwood, Clearwater, Plant City and Lakeland, Fort Meade,



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Palmetto and Mitchellville, Pine Level, Fort Ogden, and Fort Myers. A Cuban Mission in Key West was projected by the conference in 1874 to minister to the large Spanish-speaking population not being reached by the two Methodist churches in that city. The thirty-six preachers and forty-six potential appointments of 1870 had grown by 1885 to approximately eighty preachers and ninety appointments; the small membership of 1870 had grown to 12,380 in 1885, a gain far ahead of the proportionate increase in the population of the state during the same period.

## REHABILITATING EDUCATION

The Civil War seriously interrupted Florida's meager educational facilities. The state seminaries at Ocala and Tallahassee continued operation throughout the war period, but most of the private institutions were abandoned, many never to be reopened, at least not reopened under their former sponsorship. Such was the case with the Methodists' East Florida Seminary at Micanopy. While John C. Ley, its last principal under Methodist ownership, had some personal relationship with a revived and renamed academy in Micanopy, the Civil War effectively ended this Methodist educational venture, as well as several less pretentious ones which were just being projected when the war started.<sup>2</sup> Soon after the close of the Methodist institution in Micanopy its name, East Florida Seminary, was adopted by the Ocala Academy, which had been the state seminary east of the Suwannee River. Under its new name, the state seminary was moved to Gainesville in 1866 and early in the twentieth century was merged with several other



state schools to become the University of Florida. Under the constitutions of 1868 and 1885 more adequate provisions were made for state supported institutions of learning, though for years these institutions remained little more than grade schools, the students in the Gainesville seminary in 1877 ranging in age from four to twenty-four.

Division of the conference territory in 1866 removed from the jurisdiction of the Florida Conference its one remaining school, Fletcher Institute in Thomasville, Georgia. This left the conference in 1867 with no educational institutions within its borders and only a small voice in the management of the Methodist institutions in Georgia. Little time was lost, however, before plans were under way for altering this unpleasant situation. The Tallahassee district conference, in session June 7, 1867, took the first definite steps with the adoption of the following action:

Our conference is without schools or colleges. Is it not a shame and a sin? The Methodist Church in this state is in a position to control the educational interests within its bounds—a position given by her numbers and the relative social status of her members. Were the ministers and members alive to the importance of the subject, and active in labors, they might secure a school in every community, taught by religious men, and colleges for the higher culture of our sons and daughters. Colleges we greatly need—the demand is urgent, and our loss is great for the want of them.

In conclusion, your committee recommend the adoption of the following resolutions:

1. That we call the attention of all similar meetings to be held in this conference to the importance of

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establishing a male and a female college in this state, and request a full expression of opinion on the subject.

2. That we recommend to the next annual conference the adoption of some plan for the speedy establishment of colleges within our bounds.

Additional resolutions of the group called for the immediate solicitation of proposals for the establishment of a college and the appointment of an agent to travel over the state to address the churches on the "subject of education in connection with the establishment of colleges in our bounds."

The ensuing session of the Florida Conference in Monticello in December, 1867, acted upon the proposals of the Tallahassee district and directed each church to establish a school if none was available otherwise and each district to establish an academy, promising to make provision for colleges when the graduates of the proposed academies required. Having initiated the movement, the Tallahassee district proceeded immediately to appoint a committee to build its academy. Meanwhile, being anxious to do something immediately, the district undertook to raise \$200 to aid candidates for the ministry to attend Emory and Wofford colleges. Josephus Anderson, pastor at the time in Monticello, was the leading figure in the district and in the entire conference in this movement to establish adequate educational facilities.

The committee to establish an academy in the Tallahassee district began its work promptly and was ready to begin construction of a building in the autumn of 1868 at "Station Number 2 on the Pensacola and

Georgia Railroad." The project was abandoned, however, because of the financial situation brought about by the loss of the cotton crop. For more than a decade following, the general economic situation in Florida was such that no schools, academies, or colleges were undertaken by the Florida Methodists. Not until 1879 was the movement to establish schools under Methodist sponsorship revived. In that year the Tallahassee district conference noted that there were three high schools within the bounds of the district, these were located at Monticello, Tallahassee, and Quincy, but, feeling that the church should have such a school of its own, took steps looking to the establishment of a "District Conference High School." The proposed school never materialized, and the extent of actual accomplishment in educational endeavor within Florida Methodism was the establishment in 1876 of a fund for the education of preachers' children and the founding of a few private high schools in which "Christian principles predominated."

The movement to operate district academies finally came to fruition in 1883 when the Jacksonville district succeeded in establishing the South Florida Seminary at Orlando. This new venture was made possible largely through the initiative of Charles A. Fulwood, presiding elder of the Jacksonville district, Charles E. Pelot, and Thurlow Bishop. These, together with four other preachers and four laymen, constituted the board of trustees of the new school, which soon came to be known as the Wesleyan Institute. The school opened in the autumn of 1883 with Claude A. Saunders as principal. Financial difficulties soon engulfed the project, however,

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and in October, 1886, the trustees deeded the property to the city of Orlando.

Before disposing of the Orlando property, the annual conference authorized the trustees of the school to receive bids from other communities preparatory to the establishment of another school. Accordingly, bids were received, and the school awarded to Leesburg. This institution was styled "The High School and College of the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," and as such opened with four teachers and fifty-eight pupils in the autumn of 1886. Joshua Hollingsworth was the first president in Leesburg. The cumbersome name of the school was soon changed to "Florida Conference College," and under this name it operated, at times precariously, at Leesburg until the end of the century.

In addition to Hollingsworth, five other presidents headed the school during this time, serving in the following order, Theophilus W. Moore, Henry E. Partridge, Wightman F. Melton, James T. Nolen, and Thomas G. Lang. The financial situation caused by the freeze of the winter of 1894-1895 nearly caused the closing of the college; and at the end of the century the outlook for the college was very poor, leading in many quarters to suggestions that it should be moved elsewhere from Leesburg.

## THE PROGRESSING STATE

Florida, in 1885, had pretty well emerged from the nightmare of reconstruction and was well along on a progressive road. By 1883 it was generally conceded that the fundamental law of the state needed overhaul-

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

ing, consequently after popular approval, a constitutional convention assembled in Tallahassee on June 9, 1885, to write the constitution which, with amendments, has remained the basic law of the state ever since. The convention was preponderantly Democratic but there were a number of Republican members, of whom some were Negroes. Many of the provisions of the constitution of 1868 remained unchanged, but the most criticized practices, such as the broad appointive powers of the governor, were removed. Provisions for a progressive educational program and the protection of white supremacy were among the other accomplishments of the convention. These last two actions had a very direct relationship with the development of Methodism, the first determining in part the nature of future educational institutions and the latter leading to the division of the Florida work of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Besides internal governmental adjustments, the period from 1885 to the end of the century was marked by an increasing national attention for Florida. The genial climate and the state's potential wealth became subjects of wide interest. Improved transportation made the state an attraction to thousands of new settlers, as well as to seasonal visitors. The development of citrus fruits, whose planting had greatly increased in volume, promised to produce a new source of wealth. The last years of the century witnessed the expansion of the Flagler-built railroad down the east coast, the city of Miami becoming incorporated in 1896 with a population of about five hundred, but the story of the east coast belongs to the twentieth century. A yellow fever epidemic in the northeastern section of the state in 1888

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

and severe freezes in the winters of 1894-1895 and 1896-1897 were among the liabilities of the period.

Florida's proximity to Cuba drew her into the Spanish-American War in a relationship sustained by no other part of the United States. Cuban sympathizers within the state were legion, and much of the supplies of the Insurrectionists was shipped from Florida ports. During the war itself, Florida became a concentration point for American soldiers, Tampa being the main point of embarkation. Florida's economic life was upset but little during this war, and if anything, the state gained rather than lost.

## THE ST. JOHNS RIVER CONFERENCE

From the beginnings nurtured by its Freedmen's Aid Society immediately after the Civil War, the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Florida progressed sufficiently to be organized into a Florida Conference in 1873. A school for Negroes had been established under the sponsorship of the Aid Society in 1874 in Jacksonville under the name of Cookman Institute. The conference in Florida was composed of both white and Negro preachers, and its mixed character was no handicap for several years. However, as the complexion of the political and social situation in Florida began to change rapidly after the decline of the Republican party set in following the elections of 1876, agitation began for a division of the conference along racial lines. Growing demand for a comparable revision in the political arena led ultimately to the constitutional convention of 1885 to make the demanded changes. The demand within the church led to the authorization by

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the General Conference in 1884 for the racial division in Florida whenever a majority of each race voted favorably.

In many areas of the South it was the Negro members of these Northern churches who were demanding racial division, but not so with the Northern Methodists in Florida. The white members were demanding the division and the Negro members were preventing it. Finally, at the fourteenth session of the Florida Conference, in session in Ebenezer church in Jacksonville January 21-25, 1886, the question of division was brought to a vote. The conference had thirty-eight voting members present of whom twenty-four were Negroes. The provision under which the vote was taken required not only a majority of those voting but likewise a majority of each racial group. On the first day the proposed division was defeated by a vote of eighteen for and twenty against, the white members voting twelve to two for the division and the Negro members voting eighteen to six against. On the fourth day of the session five visiting preachers were invited to address the conference on the subject: "Mixed Conferences and the Result of Dividing Them." Following these addresses, the vote was reconsidered, whereupon, the resolution to divide was adopted by a vote of twenty-seven to eleven, each group having the required majority. The Negro membership retained the old name while the white group took the name "St. Johns River Conference."<sup>3</sup>

The organizing session of the new conference was held on January 25, 1886, fifteen members, one probationer, and five supplies being available for appoint-



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ments. The area covered by the new conference was theoretically all of the state east of the Apalachicola River, the same as the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, but most of the churches were located in the region between Jacksonville and Eustis. For administrative purposes the conference was divided into two districts, the East Florida and the Eustis, and Joseph H. Stoney was appointed presiding elder of the first and Henry J. Walker of the second. The Methodist Episcopal Church had made little appeal to the southern whites, hence its white churches were located primarily in those areas where recent immigration to Florida had concentrated large numbers of Northern settlers. Only three of the churches had as many as fifty members, and of these Trinity Church, Jacksonville, was the only one with more than a hundred. The total number of members in all the churches was only 657 of whom nearly two hundred were in Trinity church. However, the churches were growing, for the 657 total represented an increase of 206 members over the previous year. Bishop Edward G. Andrews was the presiding officer of the organizing session of 1886 and Bishop Cyrus D. Foss was the president of what was called the *first* session in 1887.

The first session of the St. Johns River Conference met in Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, Jacksonville, January 6, 1887, where progress of the first year was noted and plans for the next year made. The reports indicate that the conference was aggressive from the outset. A paper called *The Florida Methodist* was already being published, an increase of 20 per cent in membership achieved, and tentative plans for a college

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

formulated. Chief among the accomplishments of the conference session were more definite plans for a college. Representatives from Silver Springs Park, Mt. Dora, St. Augustine, and Orange City presented propositions looking to the establishment of the proposed college in their respective cities. A committee was appointed to investigate the various proposals.

Since the membership of the new conference was quite small and scattered it posed no serious threat to the much larger Southern Methodist Church, but the organization of the St. Johns River Conference did not go unnoticed by the larger group. While not condemning the new conference by name, the recently created Southern church *Florida Christian Advocate* took occasion early in 1888 to comment: "The Northern Methodist Church is doing a great work in the North. . . . It is at home [there] and knows how to work. But this is not true respecting the South. Here it is an importation, a stranger, and not suited to the state of things. It has come into the South as a superior to an inferior; comes as an accuser with the conviction that the Southern people are disloyal citizens; comes doing the evil work of reviving sectional feeling and old buried recollections of the past; comes with impracticable plans and exciting views of Negro equality; comes as a special favorer of a particular political party; and, coming thus, it cannot have a mission of usefulness in the South, and must fail." Strife between the two Florida Methodisms seldom became any more specific than this.

Perhaps the most ambitious undertaking of the new conference during its early years was the establishment

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

of the St. Johns River Conference College at Orange City, Florida, in October, 1887. Never any too well financed, the college led a rather precarious existence for about five years and was finally disbanded by direction of the conference in 1892. Following the abandonment of its own educational project, the conference concentrated its energies in supporting Cookman Institute, the denominational school for Negroes in Jacksonville. In addition to a zealous educational interest, the conference was much concerned about the morality of Florida, passing a number of strong resolutions about Sabbath observance, still others in regard to the sale of alcoholic beverages, one condemning a Jacksonville prize-fight, and another relative to the lottery being conducted in Honduras, which had its chief business offices in Port Tampa.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the St. Johns River Conference had grown to the point where it had twenty-eight appointments and 1160 members. The work of the conference was distributed more widely over the state than it had been in 1886, there now being churches scattered between Jacksonville and Tampa and St. Petersburg in one direction and between Jacksonville and Miami and Key West in another. While the increase in membership during the thirteen years of the conference had been 75 per cent, the total actually represented a very small portion of the white Methodists in the state, being less than 6 per cent of the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the same territory, two charges alone of this church, the First church, Tampa, and Madison, had almost exactly as many members as did the entire St. Johns River Con-

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

ference. Relationships between the two conferences, the St. Johns River and the Florida, were more or less indifferent during this period, there being but little intercommunication between the two. Two members of the Florida Conference visited the first session of the St. Johns River Conference and there was occasional visiting on the part of members of each group intermittently during the years, but, except for the one outburst in the *Florida Christian Advocate*, already mentioned, each conference conducted its business with but casual notice of the existence of the other.

## THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH

Besides the two episcopal Methodisms, there was still another white Methodist Church, the Methodist Protestant Church. This church had arisen in the late twenties of the nineteenth century as the outgrowth of an unsuccessful effort to make the Methodist Episcopal Church more democratic. Certain *reformers* had demanded as early as the General Conference of 1820 that the virtually unlimited power of the bishops should be curbed, that the presiding elders should be given a larger voice in the administration of the church, all reflections of the rising political demands of the day for a wider suffrage and more liberal state constitutions. Suffering defeats in three successive General Conferences, the reformers determined to set up an ecclesiastical organization of their own, which they styled the Methodist Protestant Church at their organizational convention on November 2, 1830.

The strength of the new church centered largely in Maryland, but shortly after its organization scattered

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

churches adhering to its more democratic form of government began to appear in all parts of the country, many of them being in the South. A number of ministers withdrew from the older Church and by the time of its first General Conference in 1834 the Methodist Protestant Church had 26,587 members and over five hundred preachers. The Georgia and the Alabama were among the fourteen annual conferences already organized by that time. Since membership in the newer church was largely by defection from the older, Florida could contribute but little since Methodist work in that territory had made little progress. There was no Florida organization, but in the early forties the papers carried frequent notices of camp meetings in Middle Florida under Methodist Protestant auspices. *The Florida Sentinel* of Tallahassee, for example, published a notice on May 27, 1845, that the Methodist Protestants would conduct a "general protracted meeting . . . at New Hope near the Oclocknee River, about midway between the Quincy Road and the road leading to Mrs. Stewart's Bridge." Four months later this same paper announced that a camp meeting would be held at "the Methodist Protestant camp-ground about eight miles west of Tallahassee" and that "additional improvements will be made on the ground, and a competent supply of ministers is confidently expected." On November 18, 1845, the news columns of the *Sentinel* noted that there would soon be a public discussion on the subject of church government at the above mentioned New Hope Church "between Dr. D. L. White, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Rev. J. H. Smith, of the Protestant Methodist Church."

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

Isolated development of a few scattered churches continued through the years, until, finally, on March 7, 1889, representatives of "the several churches of the Methodist Protestant Church in the state of Florida," assembled in Madison and organized the Florida Annual Conference of that church.<sup>4</sup> The report of the committee on statistics at the first session noted "two ministers, two preachers, and ninety-nine members." The territory was divided into four circuits, Madison, Trinity, Bellville, and Perry, and the four pastors were assigned, respectively, John G. Caldwell, Thomas J. Lyle, G. W. Walker, and James M. Hendry. Thomas J. Lyle had been recently engaged in the formation of several new churches and was the one person most responsible for the organization of the annual conference. The original manuscript record book of the conference carries the following notations about the formation of Methodist Protestant churches in Florida, though it obviously refers only to those but recently founded: "The first appointment of the Methodist Protestant Church in Florida was held at San Pedro schoolhouse, nine miles south of Madison, on the first Sunday and fifth day of February, 1888, by Rev. T. J. Lyle. The first . . . church was organized there on the third Sunday, the seventeenth day of June, 1888, by Rev. T. J. Lyle, with twenty-one members." Lyle organized a second church near Madison in August and in September he organized two churches in nearby Taylor County.

The Methodist Protestant Church made erratic progress during the years between 1889 and 1900, having at one time as many as seven different circuits with more

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

than four hundred members, but the totals for 1900 had dropped to three circuits with less than 150 members.

## THE CIRCUIT RIDER DISMOUNTS

Almost symbolic was Robert Howren Barnett's sale of his horse and buggy about 1885 while he was presiding elder of the Tampa district. In the brief space of three years he had seen railroads reach all parts of his hitherto railless district. Florida and Methodism were leaving the horse and buggy days and were entering upon an era of rail transportation. Not that transportation by buggy was entirely gone, but in a very real sense it symbolizes the dismounting of the Florida circuit rider. From the outset he had traveled by horseback, then as the trails widened into roads he had ridden in a buggy, but by 1885 the iron horse was reaching to all of the settled parts of the peninsula and the circuit rider was availing himself of the benefits. This was not the only sense in which he was dismounting either. At the outset, the Florida itinerant had been largely a man with a scriptural message to deliver from a pulpit, but by 1885 he was slowly dismounting for social action.

The burden of his earlier message had been the salvation of individuals from sin and spiritual death; now it was becoming increasingly clear that something must be done about the sins of society. The social as well as the personal implications of Christianity came more into focus as the complexities of society increased. "Poverty, intemperance, extortion, irresponsible use of wealth, unhealthful and indecent conditions of life, ignorance, social ostracism, despair, lust, cruelty, laziness,



## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

ness, dishonesty, untruthfulness," came to have a place alongside the long denounced sins of "dancing, attendance upon circuses and theatricals, and drinking and selling spirituous liquors." Attendant with this larger concept of the nature of his mission, the circuit rider came more and more to be a man of "practical affairs" rather than just a preacher with a text to expound. The change was slower in Florida than it was in many other parts of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, but a few realized that as surely as the mode of transportation was changing, the function and message of the church must be broadened.

In addition to persistent efforts to found schools, an increasing realization of its social mission, and a constant vigil to see to it that no new settlement was left without Methodist services, the establishment of the *Florida Christian Advocate* was the chief accomplishment of Southern Methodism in Florida during the last fifteen years of the century. Dependent first upon the *Southern Christian Advocate* and since 1878 upon the *Wesleyan Advocate*, the Florida Conference finally established its own paper in 1886 under the editorship of J. P. DePass. He remained as editor for one year and was succeeded by Josephus Anderson, who edited the publication until past the end of the century. Leesburg was the place of publication most of this time, though the paper had been published in Sanford during its initial years.

The fiftieth session of the Florida Conference, meeting in Palatka in January, 1894, made provision for the observance of its completion of fifty years at the fifty-first session in Jacksonville in January, 1895.

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Accordingly, an elaborate "Jubilee Program" was held, with John C. Ley, the only member of the first session still active in the Florida Conference, preaching the sermon. Indeed, only three other members of that initial meeting had survived, one of these was a superannuated member of the Florida Conference, E. L. T. Blake, a second was Simon Peter Richardson, then connected with the North Georgia Conference, and the third was George W. Pratt of Palatka, who was no longer a member of the conference. In addition to the sermon, numerous papers dealing with the history of the conference were read.

A growing emphasis on Sunday schools, the rising importance of the women's missionary work, and the organization of young people's societies likewise marked the field of endeavor during the closing years of the century. The Florida Conference closed the year 1900 with 19,459 members, this representing a slight decline from its record high membership of 21,571 in 1895, indeed it was almost the exact membership of a decade earlier. For the first time in its history Florida Methodism was failing to make sustained gains. While it barely held its own during the nineties, relatively it was losing heavily, for during this same period the population of Florida increased 32.5 per cent, and this decline could not be charged to the rise of other Methodist groups either, for it has already been pointed out that the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestant Church had no substantial membership by 1900. Methodism was really being challenged by many other denominations which had made a belated start in Florida. The financial difficulties of the nineties,

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

coupled with the relative loss of members, joined to place the main body of Methodists in Florida in a somewhat unfavorable position as the century ended.

Meanwhile, though the total membership was increasing but little, new areas were being occupied as fast as they were settled. Among the places appearing in the Methodist appointments in 1900 that had been newcomers since 1885 the chief were along the lower east coast of the state, though the real development of this region was not to come until well along in the twentieth century. Lemon City Methodist church [now Grace Methodist church, Miami] was at one time the only Methodist church between Fort Pierce and Key West. Indian River Mission had long been in the appointments, but in 1893 Titusville, Rockledge, and Cocoa appear; in 1895 West Palm Beach and Biscayne Bay missions appear; Fort Pierce appeared in 1898; and in 1899 Miami appeared. While many individuals served in the development of Methodism along the east coast, two names figure prominently in these appointments, those of Charles W. White and C. Frederick Blackburn. While not the first to preach there, Blackburn was the first Methodist preacher assigned to "Miami," and no fewer than fifteen churches have developed from the original Miami work. It is asserted of Blackburn that "he organized churches, supervised the erection of buildings, and served as pastor and presiding elder of almost every charge from Fernandina to Key West." While this development was taking place along the east coast, many individuals, chief among whom was Ira S. Patterson, were pioneering along the west coast. Patterson organized Methodist churches in

## THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

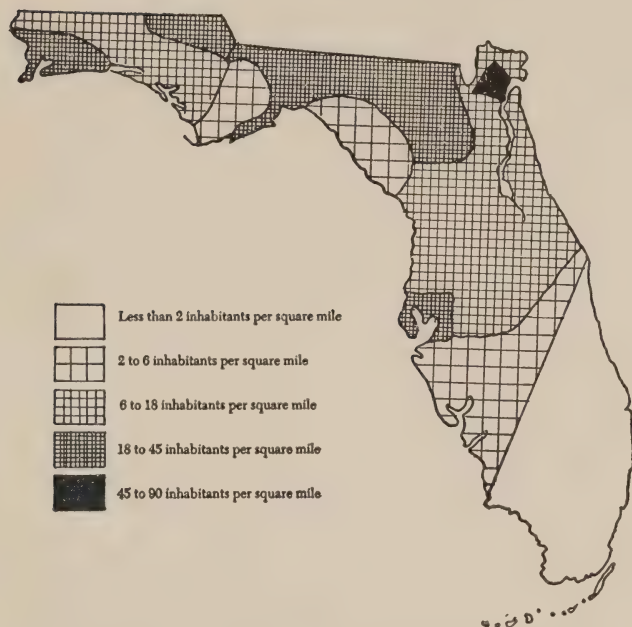
many places, St. Petersburg and Bradenton being among them. The task of keeping Methodism evenly distributed over the state required an ever increasing number of preachers and in 1900 the Florida Conference was assigning them to 118 appointments whereas in 1885 there were only 90 assignments. Thus as the century closed Florida Methodism was expanding geographically but making little progress numerically.

## CHAPTER IV

# TWENTIETH CENTURY ROUTES THROUGH WAR, BOOM, AND DEPRESSION

WHEN the twentieth century dawned on January 1, 1901, the pattern for Florida's development was pretty well drawn. The three and a half decades since the Civil War had witnessed a slow but persistent transition in Florida's economic, social, political, and religious life. The very last year of the nineteenth century had witnessed the last of the state conventions for the purpose of nominating state and federal officials, a broader based democracy being achieved thereafter by primaries. The last of the convention-nominated governors, William S. Jennings, was inaugurated on January 5, 1901. Aside from filling in between the islands of population already dotted over the state, the chief innovations in twentieth century Florida have been an improved system of state-supported higher education and a new network of highways necessitated by the advent of the automobile, but even in these instances the shadow of the nineteenth century is firmly implanted. The real economic and political issue of the early years of the new century was over the question of monopolies, the issue in Florida being termed "corporation and anti-corporation."

## TWENTIETH CENTURY ROUTES



### DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN FLORIDA, 1900

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OF CHANGE by Kathryn Trimmer Abbey*

Napoleon B. Broward, who became governor in 1905, dominated the state political arena for many years, and his influence lasted long past his death in 1910. Prohibition was frequently injected into the political picture and during the war-years a wave of anti-Catholic agitation swept Florida. These issues, coupled with one of the most weird political campaigns

in Florida history, swept Sidney J. Catts, a Baptist preacher of De Funiak Springs, into the governorship on the ticket of the Prohibition party in the elections of 1916. The middle twenties saw the most spectacular of Florida's land booms, and the thirties plunged Florida deeper into the financial depression into which she had fallen when her real estate market collapsed. The year 1941 found a prominent Methodist layman, Spessard L. Holland, in the governor's chair and marked the advent of war once again. Between 1900 and 1940 Florida's population increased by more than 250 per cent, while the increase in that portion east of the Apalachicola River was almost 290 per cent.

In the midst of this ever changing and fast growing Florida, the three different Methodist groups that were ultimately to unite to form the Methodist Church labored diligently, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, having an increase in membership during the forty years only slightly under the proportionate increase in population in its area, while the Methodist Episcopal Church had the amazing increase of 1245 per cent during this same time. Efforts to combine the national organizations of the three Methodist churches were made intermittently without success until 1939, when this was finally accomplished, and in which year steps were taken to merge their Florida organizations into one conference. The process of merging has extended over several years and now at the end of five years can hardly be called completed. During the years of the twentieth century the Methodist churches have shared the fortunes of Florida, each revamping educational institutions in the first decade, suffering from war



and religious fanaticism in the second, contracting huge debts in the third, refunding bonds in the fourth, and anxiously awaiting the end of another war in the fifth.

## THE METHODIST PROTESTANT PATH

The Florida Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church began the century centered in Madison and Taylor counties with only three appointments and 144 members. In 1920 the membership had grown to 480 and in addition to its middle Florida churches, Jacksonville had been added as an appointment. The General Conference of the church abolished the Florida Conference in 1924 and merged it with the Alabama Conference; therefore what would have been the thirty-ninth session of the Florida group was not held. After one year, the Florida Conference was restored and met for what it called its fortieth session in Boyd, Florida, in October, 1926.

The session of the conference in 1926 was perhaps the most important ever held, for at this time three churches in the Orlando area, Trinity, Calvary, and Orlo Vista, were received into the conference, thereby adding an entirely new area of the state to the work of the denomination. Outside the areas noted, Taylor and Madison counties and Orlando, the church had but little success. The Jacksonville church did not long survive, and mission projects in Sarasota and Gulf counties had little numerical strength. The Florida Conference was always designated as a mission conference, consequently it was not eligible to vote on the matter of the union of the three Methodist denominations. The last president of the conference was W. M. Irwin

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

and he, along with J. T. Dingley, C. C. Martin, Neal W. Vause, Jr., F. Irving Bond, J. A. Boyd, and T. W. Jennings, constituted the final list of ministers, while the total number of members in the nine churches was 350.

## THE ST. JOHNS RIVER ROAD

Starting the century with only 1,160 members, the St. Johns River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church made little progress for several years, suffering losses in membership for several years, but beginning in 1906 a steady growth began, resulting finally in the most spectacular relative growth of any of the three Florida Methodisms, showing an increase of 245 per cent by 1920 and 1245 per cent by 1940. Its rate of growth, however, had slowed down to 20 per cent during the last four years of its separate existence, though during the same period the Southern Methodist conference gained only 12 per cent. The most rapid expansion in membership came in the middle twenties when a great number of members of the Methodist Episcopal Church moved to Florida and either affiliated with existing Florida churches of that denomination or aided in the organization of new ones, though the churches of the St. Johns River Conference were by no means entirely dependent upon this sources for new members.

The work of the conference was administered through two districts, the Jacksonville and Eustis, for many years. In 1911 these districts were combined and for three years the conference had but one district. Following the increase in the number of churches along the

lower east coast, the conference was divided into Jacksonville and Miami districts in 1914. A third district, the Everglades mission district, was constituted in 1920 and enlarged into what was called the Tampa district in 1921. The three districts, Jacksonville, Miami, and Tampa, were retained until 1927 when the Tampa district was discontinued.

The conference session for 1926 was perhaps the most encouraging ever held. Everything in Florida was then at its crest and the reports to the conference showed unprecedented material progress. Ten churches were reported as being either completed or in process of construction. Four parsonages had been built during the year, lots had been secured for projected buildings, huge sums had been paid on indebtedness, and most of the salaries of the ministers had been greatly increased. A vast expansion program was projected at this conference and the future appeared exceedingly bright. The twelve months intervening between the sessions of 1926 and 1927 were perhaps the most disastrous in Florida's history. The collapse of the real estate boom had been attended by widespread bank failures and a general financial depression, severe freezes had ruined the crops, and a devastating hurricane had left death and destruction over a wide path. As a result of the general collapse, the benevolent contributions of the whole conference dropped between 1927 and 1929 from \$188,967 to only \$61,041, though the drop in amount paid for ministerial support was nothing like as marked. The conference of 1927, however, even in the face of all kinds of disasters, did proceed with plans to enlarge its educational program by the employment of a "Con-

ference Director of Religious Education," but the remainder of the elaborate expansion program projected in 1926 was abandoned and never fully revived.

The college and publication ventures of the conference had been abandoned before the beginning of the twentieth century and were never revived. General and regional publications of the Methodist Episcopal Church proved adequate and no effort was made to publish a local paper. In the field of education the conference manifested much interest, especially in the promotion of Epworth Leagues and Sunday schools, but the ill-fated St. Johns River Conference College of the nineteenth century remained its only attempt at operating an institution of learning. Though possessed of no college of its own, representation was held by the conference at one time or another on the boards of trustees of two institutions, Bethune-Cookman College and Mt. Zion Seminary, and in 1926 a committee was appointed to promote closer cooperation with Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. In 1928 the St. Johns became one of the patronizing conferences of Tennessee Wesleyan College at Athens, Tennessee, and thereby was entitled to representation on the governing board of that institution.

Relationships between the St. Johns River Conference and the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, were extremely limited during the first quarter of the century, consisting almost exclusively of occasional visits of individual preachers at the annual sessions. While as early as 1908 the conference had unanimously adopted a resolution urging its General Conference to take steps to bring about organic unity

## TWENTIETH CENTURY ROUTES

of all American Methodisms, it was not until 1925 that the first unity in Florida was ever attained. In that year, after the conference had voted in favor of the proposed merger of the two episcopal Methodisms in America, the state Epworth League organizations of the two denominations merged their annual assemblies, though this merger was later abandoned. The union of the denominations was defeated, but relationships between the two groups in Florida became much more cordial and in 1927 official messengers from the Florida Conference were received by the St. Johns River Conference.

The fraternal messengers in 1927 proposed the creation of a joint commission by the two conferences to provide for the exchange of churches and to prevent overlapping and competitive work. The commission was created and functioned for approximately four years, during which time at least two exchanges were effected involving churches in Hollywood and Homestead, Florida. The commission was finally disbanded in 1931 when the Southern church failed to make effective its recommendations regarding competitive work in Tarpon Springs and Fort Myers. In 1936 cooperation was again effected in the support of the Florida Methodist Orphanage and of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Florida. In this same year the conference voted unanimously in favor of the proposal for uniting three of the Methodist denominations in America.

The St. Johns River Conference assembled for the last time in Tampa on June 9, 1939, in an adjourned session of its fifty-third annual meeting, shortly after which its members met with the representatives of the

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

two other conferences to constitute the first session of the Florida Conference of the newly created Methodist Church. During the more than fifty years of its existence, the St. Johns River Conference had many capable leaders; among them were the following whom it chose as its representatives in the General Conferences of the denomination: ministerial, C. C. McLean, E. B. Snyder, L. S. Rader, L. L. Fisher, R. A. Carnine, D. H. Rutter, R. N. Merrill, Lawrence Radcliffe, and George E. Farrar (to the Uniting Conference of 1939); laymen, George T. King, James Armstrong, A. W. Biddle, G. Prentice Carson, Charles W. Kinne, A. R. Welsh, L. M. Parker, W. W. Liddell, Mrs. J. W. Harkness, and Fred B. Noble.

## THE SOUTHERN HIGHWAY

The highway of the Southern Methodist Church was by far the widest of the three twentieth century Methodist routes through Florida, but while the road was wide the grade was slightly downhill, as far as relative membership was concerned. This is revealed by the fact that in 1890 one person out of every twenty within the bounds of the Florida Conference belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; in 1900 the ratio had changed to only one in twenty-two, and in 1940 only one in twenty-three and one-half. The descent, of course, was not constant, there being many undulations along the way, such as in 1920 when the proportion changed to one in eighteen. The fluctuations in contributions were much greater, starting in 1901 with only \$118,837, the record total of \$2,289,519 was reached in 1925 but by 1933 it had declined to

## TWENTIETH CENTURY ROUTES

\$787,586.<sup>1</sup> Enrollment in the Sunday schools ran a much more uneven course than either church membership or contributions, this enrollment being two-thirds the membership total at the beginning of the century; by 1920 it had dropped to one-half, in 1927 and for a few years following it was almost equal, but beginning in 1933 the relative enrollment began to drop sharply, reaching in 1940 approximately the same two-thirds ratio with which it had started the century.

Amid all these fluctuations the Florida Conference was making significant contributions to the religious life of Florida. In addition to the work of the Sunday schools, the Epworth League movement had a large place in the churches of the conference and filled a great need in supplying devotional and recreational opportunities for youth. The work of these two agencies was consolidated into an enlarged program of Christian education in 1930. Missions received a great emphasis in the developing conference and the work of the women of the church in this field was especially significant. Church extension, the building of churches in communities unable to erect their own buildings, church hospitals, an orphanage, a weekly paper, and a college constituted the major means through which the church made its contribution to the growing state of which it was a part. While heresy-hunting has never been a characteristic of Methodists, on several occasions in the years following the first World War when the fundamentalist-modernist controversy was raging in religious circles, the Florida Methodists had occasional flare-ups in the form of controversies relating to doctrinal standards.



## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

The *Florida Christian Advocate* was the chief medium through which the various denominational undertakings were promoted. Josephus Anderson, who had been editor of the paper for fourteen years, resigned in 1901. There were a number of editors and several places of publication during the twelve years before 1913 when J. Edgar Wilson became the editor and began the publication of this weekly Methodist paper in Lakeland.<sup>2</sup> So long as it was published in Florida, Lakeland remained the place from which it was issued. Wilson remained editor of the paper until 1925, when the *Advocate* was merged with the general publication of the whole denomination, the *Christian Advocate*. For several years thereafter the *Christian Advocate* published a Florida edition, but in the early thirties the *Florida Christian Advocate* was revived. It was again published in Lakeland and until 1937 had no full-time editor, editorial supervision being given meanwhile by various denominational officials and preachers located in Lakeland. In 1937 R. P. Marshall became editor and remained in that position until the paper was discontinued at the end of the year 1940.

Feeling that the conference college would be able to expand more rapidly if moved from Leesburg to some other community, members of the college board of trustees voted in May, 1900, to take steps looking to the removal. With the approval of the conference, the college was moved to Sutherland [not far from Clearwater]. In 1902, the school was opened there under the name of Florida Seminary, with Shade W. Walker as its new president. The school prospered from the outset and in 1906 the name was changed to Southern

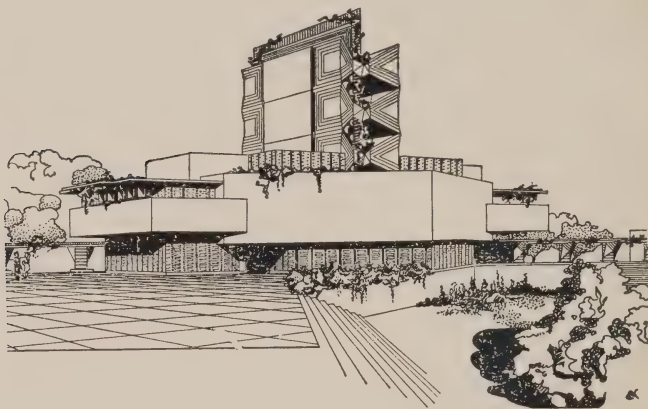
## TWENTIETH CENTURY ROUTES

College. The report to the conference for that year showed property valued at \$175,000, a faculty of seventeen, and an enrollment of 310. President Walker resigned in 1907 and was succeeded by the chairman of the board of trustees, John P. Hilburn; whereupon Walker was elected to chairmanship of the trustees. The five years of Hilburn's presidency saw the college make great progress. He resigned in 1912 and was succeeded by Walter L. Clifton, who in turn was succeeded by Rhenus H. Alderman in 1914. The eleven-year administration of President Alderman was characterized by several dramatic events in the life of the college, including two fires, two storms, an epidemic of influenza, and the removal of the college on two occasions—from Sutherland to Clearwater Beach and later to Lakeland. There was a Student Army Training Corps on the Sutherland campus during the World War as well as a department of military training in the college itself. J. Edgar Wall, L. N. Pipkin, and E. T. Roux were elected chairman, vice-chairman, and treasurer, respectively, of the board of trustees in 1919, positions which they have held without interruption ever since.

The trustees determined in 1921 to remove the college to some other location and finally selected Lakeland. Under the leadership of President Alderman, new buildings were erected and Southern College opened for work in the autumn of 1922 on its new campus on the shores of Lake Hollingsworth in Lakeland. President Alderman resigned in the spring of 1925, whereupon the presidency was offered to William F. Dunkle, a member of the conference, but he declined.

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

In the summer of 1925 the beginning of the longest and most successful administration in the history of the college was begun when Ludd M. Spivey assumed the



ANNIE PFEIFFER CHAPEL  
FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE

presidency. The college was staggering under a heavy indebtedness when President Spivey began his tenure, and the general financial collapse the following year only added to the problems of the college. Meanwhile, however, a program of expansion had been launched but, while the enrollment expanded, the precarious financial condition of the college and the general financial depression of the country delayed the building expansion for nearly ten years. Under the leadership of President Spivey the entire indebtedness of the college was removed by 1935. In this same year the name of the college was changed to Florida Southern College, it was accredited by the Southern Association of Col-

## TWENTIETH CENTURY ROUTES

leges and Secondary Schools, and an extensive building program was begun. Since 1935, the college has established a wide reputation as a center of liberal education. The building expansion begun in 1935 is now being completed and the year 1945 will mark the twentieth year in the administration of President Spivey.

In addition to publishing and college undertakings, the conference carried out many other projects vital in the life of Florida. Foremost among these should be mentioned its other educational activities, especially in the local churches and in the state-supported institutions of higher education. In 1930 the whole educational program was placed under the supervision of one board, of which R. Ira Barnett has been the executive secretary since. Through its orphanage, the conference has made another contribution to the welfare of Florida. The orphanage, located at Enterprise, Florida, was acquired in 1908 and since that date has grown rapidly and had a record of great service to Florida and Florida Methodism. Attention has already been called to the fact that in addition to its own conference the orphanage came under the patronage of the St. Johns River Conference in 1936. The missionary undertakings of the conference have been widespread and are too extensive to elaborate upon. It should be noted, however, that much of the credit for the success of the many missionary undertakings is due to the Woman's Missionary Society, which in the united church changed its name to the Woman's Society of Christian Service. Along an entirely different line, a service rendered to the conference itself should be noted, the long tenure of one of its secretaries. From 1874 through 1917 the con-

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

ference had but one secretary, Frederick Pasco. This tenure was long, not only within the conference, but in the entire denomination's history.

On June 9, 1939, the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, assembled for the last time. This final meeting was held in Tampa and was called the ninety-sixth annual session of the conference, though only ninety-four years and four months had elapsed since the conference had been organized.<sup>3</sup> At the end of the more than ninety-four years of its existence, the conference had a larger membership throughout its churches than it had ever had in its history, the largest Sunday school enrollment it had had in almost ten years, and 397 congregations organized into 207 pastoral charges or appointments.

### "THE METHODISTS ARE ONE PEOPLE"

Many projects to unite the several Methodist denominations in the United States arose during the years of reconstruction. Each plan had its own formula and pattern for union, one called for uniting Methodist Protestants and Southern Methodists, another expected to unite the non-episcopal Methodist bodies, a third required a new name, and so on. The healing of the differences between the two episcopal Methodisms might have been accomplished soon after the Civil War had it not been for the reconstruction policies of the government, policies readily concurred in by the Methodists of the North. The policy of regarding the South as a mission field and the resulting southern resentment has already been noted. The church leaders of the South soon regarded the northern post-war talk of

union as a scheme to eliminate their church. Limited relationships of a more cordial nature were soon established, however, and in 1872 the regular exchange of fraternal delegates between the General Conferences of the two churches began. This exchange eventually led to the appointment of a joint commission to study bases of fraternity. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the two churches were planning a joint hymnal and order of worship, a book which served for almost thirty-five years.

The movement for merging the two denominations—a movement later enlarged to include the Methodist Protestant Church—went forward slowly between 1906 and 1925 but seemingly with every prospect of final success. A plan of union, involving the two episcopal groups, was submitted to the annual conferences in the middle twenties. Little opposition to the plan developed in the Methodist Episcopal Church and it was adopted in the annual conferences by large majorities. Conditions were different, however, in the Southern Church, and it was impossible to secure the requisite three-fourths majority in the annual conferences. In Florida, the conference of each church gave the plan a large majority, though the vote of the southern group failed to attain the three-fourths figure.<sup>4</sup> Union was not defeated, only delayed, for in 1939 an even larger group, enlarged by the inclusion of the Methodist Protestant Church, united to form *The Methodist Church*. On the question of merger, the Florida Methodists voted overwhelmingly in its favor, the vote in the St. Johns River Conference being unanimous.<sup>5</sup> Foremost among the factors making union possible was the fact that



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American Methodists had never lost sight of their common historical heritage; through controversy and division they recalled the assertion of their founder, "The Methodists are one people." Union was long delayed because many leaders, especially those in the North, advocated ignoring the past, especially the controversial phases of the past. William Warren Sweet has pointed out in a recent interpretation of the Methodist union that this supposition that the movement would prosper more by forgetting the past was the most fallacious assumption of the whole effort. The plan of union of the twenties was defeated very largely because certain southern leaders had *not* forgotten the old issues, they having had far more to forget than their northern brethren. Union failed as long as it was on a basis of forgetting or ignoring the past; it was achieved when the past was faced and a common viewpoint on all the old controversial issues was attained, when the past was understood, not ignored.

The Florida Methodist routes, converging rapidly during the late thirties, finally effected a juncture in Tampa on June 9, 1939, when the first session of the Florida Conference of the united Methodist Church was held; though little more than a formal merger was accomplished until the following year. Bishop Paul B. Kern, of the former Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and Bishop Charles W. Flint, of the former Methodist Episcopal Church, presided at the initial session; Bishop Kern was in charge of the conference until June, 1940. Bishop Arthur J. Moore was assigned to the Florida Conference shortly before its second session and he has remained in charge since that time. The



united church began its Florida career with one out of each twenty people in its territory (i. e., all of Florida east of the Apalachicola River) a member, this resulting in a total membership of 84,686, and the per capita contributions during the first year amounted to approximately \$16.35. Both membership and per capita giving have increased by about 18 per cent since the first year. The solution of the practical problems of the merger in Florida has progressed with a minimum of friction and the churches were very well integrated by the time the current war began. Adjusting to the dislocations and uncertainties of war has been one of the chief tasks of the united church. The generally improved economic conditions have also enabled the conference to make an enviable financial record during the past several years. Under the leadership of Bishop Moore, the Florida Conference became the first conference in the entire church to pay the full amount requested for the benevolent budget.

Mindful that February, 1944, would mark the beginning of the one hundredth year since the organization of the original Florida Conference, the session of the conference meeting in June, 1943, designated the year between then and the 1944 session as the *Centennial Year* and elected a commission to arrange for the observance of the anniversary. The commission was composed of one hundred members with Governor Spessard L. Holland as honorary chairman and Henry W. Blackburn as temporary chairman. A permanent organization was effected in September, 1943, with Bishop Arthur J. Moore as chairman, Fred B. Noble and J. Edwin Larson, vice-chairmen, J. A. Phifer as treasurer,

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and John Branscomb, the executive secretary. The commission was divided into four committees: historical, spiritual objectives, finance, and publicity, with Ludd M. Spivey, George A. Foster, A. Fred Turner, and Henry W. Blackburn chairmen, respectively.

### FACING THE FUTURE

Thus, Florida Methodism pauses after nearly a century and a quarter to survey the past and prepare for the future. The very nature of the centennial celebration itself is a good omen, for it reveals that the passing of the years has not lulled the Methodists of the peninsular state into believing that they have a ready-made solution for each new problem that arises. "A movement, not a monument," is the slogan of the celebration; and this is indicative of the fact that the chief emphasis is upon Methodism's obligations to Florida and the Floridians of today and tomorrow. The task of Florida Methodism is to evolve practical ways of helpful procedure on the basis of accumulated experience and in the light of actual conditions. Just as the resourcefulness of the trail-blazing Florida circuit rider enabled the church to contribute to Florida's past, so today with his dismounted younger brother, success can come only through a long process of social effort as the church leads and shares in the concrete task of helping people live together in a real world.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER I. BLAZING THE TRAIL

1. Extracts from the diary of Joshua N. Glenn for August, 1823, follows:

Fri 1st we are very much annoyed by the dead Fish which float down the river in great abundance and have a very bad Smell — it is supposed that is the fresh water which kill them this day I got throw the old Testament principally before breakfast.

Sat 2nd the Presbyterians have divided the Congregation to their cost — and this evening Sent to me wishing me to make my appointments So as not to interfere with theirs — I told them that they had divided the congregation and for my part I felt under no obligations to them and therefore I Should make Such arrangements as Suited me and they might do the same.

Sun 3rd we had a good congregation three times to day altho the Presbyterians had Church at the Same time — I now have the Council Chamber to my Self and intend to preach Four times per week viz Sun  $\frac{1}{2}$  after 10 =  $\frac{1}{2}$  after 3 = & early candle light & on Wednesday night

Mon 4th wrote a long letter to Father & Mother this evening the Presbyterians invited Br Floyd and myself to go with them down to the Light House and then return and take Tea at Mr. Wallens which we done — this was only done to make up the breach — but that kind of friendship will not do for me.

Tues 5th the Presbyterians are Still trying to get me to associate with them — but if I keep in the Same mind I am now I Shall have nothing to do with them heare any more

Wen 6th Parson Lathrop very imprudently came to See Mrs. Streeter about Some observations She had made the import of which was that She was determined never to heare him

## THE TRAIL OF THE FLORIDA CIRCUIT RIDER

pray or preach again — the inter view was not So pleasant as could have been wished.

Fri 8th formd an acquaintances with Parson Motte the Episcopalian Minister who came heare yesterday.

Sat 9th this morning we had too arrivals from Charleston whic ware haild with joy for we ware allmost in a State of Starvation

Sun 10th Parson Motte preacht for us in the forenoon and I in the evening.

Mon 11th Cap Richardson of St. Marys Geo came in an brought a letter from Br Laney.

This day was Six years ago I imbrased religion and I can truly Say that I am not weary of this cause or Sorry in the least for Starting as Soon as I did my only grief is that I didnot Start Sooner for I have found the path very pleasant.

Tues 12th received a letter from Father & Mother one from Sister Eunice allso one from Br A.. P.. King — and answered the two former

Wen 13th wrote a letter to Br Laney and on to Br Samuel *Hamilton* in Indiana

The 14th Br Flويد left us to go holme for his family

Sun 17th preacht three times and went to hear Parson Motte once who preaches in the court house with Parson L.

Mon 18th wrote a letter to Br. J. O. Andrew of Savannah Geo — and one to A. P.. King Geo received Three dollars from Mr. Mrs Smith for my support

Th 21st received a letter from Br Laney Fri 22nd and felt quite unwell all day but in the evening held a prayer meeting by the preasent arangement I preach four times per week and hold prayer meetings on one friday night at Mr Streeters and the next at Mr. Davises and Sometimes on Thursday night at Mr Du Bose es

Sun 24th felt more comfortable in prayer this evening then I have for Some time past — how pleasant the communion with God — this evening in the time of preaching many appeard very Solom

Tues 26th received a letter from Br & Sr Rowen and one from G. Wingfield and wrote to Br & Sr Rowan and Br Laney

Wen 27th visited Dr Hall who is very ill and found he felt

## NOTES

alarmed about his Situation I Spint Some time with him and then prayed with and for him

Th 28th visited Dr. Hall again and found him better in body — how apt we are to forget promices and good resolutions made on Sick beds.

Sat 30th went down to the beach and got dreadfully Sun burnt returned and borded the Sloop John Henry of Savannah and found my box of Books from New York

Sun 31st Parson M. Preacht for us in the forenoon and I in the afternoon with my usual zeal and liberty

2. The Fowler mentioned is Reverend Andrew Fowler, who went to St. Augustine under the auspices of the Young Men's Missionary Society of Charleston, South Carolina. See Edgar Legare Pennington, "The Episcopal Church in South Florida, 1764 - 1892," *Tequesta*, March, 1941, 47-88; other useful articles by Pennington will be found in the *Florida Historical Quarterly*.
3. See the Bibliographical Suggestions for information on how Ley, Smith, and other historians erroneously attributed these first appointments in Tallahassee to 1824.
4. For the Florida portion of the journal of Isaac Boring, see Charles T. Thrift, Jr., "Isaac Boring, Pioneer Florida Circuit Rider," *Religion in the Making*, March, 1943, 185-204.
5. The only thorough study of newspapers and editors of the period is to be found in J. O. Knauss, *Territorial Florida Journalism* (Deland: Florida State Historical Society, 1926).

## CHAPTER II. WIDENING THE LONG TRAIL

1. The northern boundary of the Florida Conference in Georgia was fixed as "a direct line from Fort Gaines on the Chattahoochee River to Albany, thence along the Ockmulgee and Flint River Railroad to the Ockmulgee River, thence down the Ockmulgee and Altamaha Rivers to the sea."
2. No minutes of the first session were published, except in condensed form, along with the minutes of all the conferences. The *Southern Christian Advocate* and contemporary newspapers give the only detailed information available.
3. See the Bibliographical Suggestions for information relative to the smaller number attributed to this session by Ley.
4. Photostatic copies of the extant pages of the minutes of the

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trustees of the East Florida Seminary at Micanopy were made available through the kindness of President J. J. Tigert of the University of Florida. These pages are deposited at the University of Florida in The Florida State Museum, T. Van Hyning, director.

5. A part of Georgia was in the Florida Conference until 1866. While it is impossible to separate the Georgia and Florida statistics, a comparison of the membership in 1845 with that of 1850 in the five principal Georgia appointments reveals a rate of increase far above the average; without the Georgia territory the rate of increase for the Florida Conference was even lower than 7 per cent.
6. The population for 1845 is usually given at 57,951. This was the total reported by seventeen counties, but nine counties failed to report. From a study of the warrants issued by the Comptroller's office, Dr. Dorothy Dodd has ascertained that the population for twenty-four counties was 66,378. Dade and St. Lucie counties, apparently, did not return a census; in 1850, Dade had a population of only 159, St. Lucie, 139.
7. Ira L. Potter, Robert H. Howren, W. W. Griffin, and Simon P. Richardson were the members of the conference elected to serve in the absence of a bishop.
8. See the Bibliographical Suggestions for information about the time of the session of the conference held in Micanopy.
9. The net loss in Negro membership each year is as follows: 1863, 987; 1864, 129; 1865, 560; 1866, 2505; 1867, 917; 1869, 299; 1870, 296, leaving only 54; 1871, 47, leaving only 7; and 1871, 7, thus wiping out the entire Negro membership. Only rarely, thereafter, was a Negro member added to the roll of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

### CHAPTER III. THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

1. Robert Hudson Howren was the first preacher assigned to "Newnansville." This appointment was made in 1839.
2. Madison Female Seminary was one of the proposed schools.
3. Prior to 1873, when the Florida Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, the work of this denomination in Florida had composed two districts (St. Johns and Suwannee) of the South Carolina Conference. The Jackson-

## NOTES

ville, St. Johns, and Gainesville districts had later composed the Florida Conference.

4. The earliest Methodist Protestant churches in Florida were practically independent congregations, rather than a part of a connectional system.

### CHAPTER IV. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ROUTES THROUGH WAR, BOOM, AND DEPRESSION

1. The total for 1926 might have been higher than that for 1925, but the time of meeting of the annual conference was changed from December to June. Several such changes, resulting in either six or eighteen months between sessions, have confused the records of the conference considerably.
2. Other editors of the *Advocate*: L. W. Moore, John B. Ley, Frederick Pasco, N. H. Williams, Edward F. Ley, Daniel B. Sweat, I. C. Jenkins, R. Ira Barnett, Ben F. Rogers, P. M. Boyd, and Henry W. Blackburn. Places of publication: Sanford, Leesburg, Gainesville, Live Oak, Jacksonville, Arcadia, Nashville (Tennessee), and Lakeland.
3. *The Journal of the Florida Conference of The Methodist Church* (1940), 137-45, contains a list of the deceased members and a list of the sessions of the Florida and St. Johns River conferences.
4. The vote in the Florida Conference was 149-110; in the St. Johns River Conference, 39-4.
5. Being a mission conference, the Florida Methodist Protestant group had no vote; the Florida Conference vote was 218-6; the St. Johns River Conference, 34-0.



## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions are in no wise intended as a bibliography for Florida Methodism. They are intended, rather, for these three purposes: (1) to suggest additional informative reading on American Methodism and the history of Florida; (2) to indicate the nature of the materials on which this study is based; and (3) to evaluate the most popular secondary sources.

The best book available on American Methodism is William Warren Sweet's *Methodism in American History* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1933). By far the most readable and reliable contemporary book on the history of Florida is Kathryn Trimmer Abbey's *Florida-Land of Change* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941).

This study has been based upon two entirely different types of material, the purely Methodist parts being based almost without exception upon either hitherto unused manuscript sources or the published official records of the churches concerned; the sections relating more particularly to the history of Florida are taken largely from secondary sources. Diaries, minutes, deeds, and letters comprise the chief items of the first section, while the several excellent longer studies on Florida and the numerous articles in the *Florida Historical Quarterly* make up the latter group.

Three volumes, each now out of print, have long constituted the most readily available material on the history of Methodism in Florida. These books, in the order of their publication, are: George G. Smith, Jr., *The History of Methodism in Georgia and Florida, From 1785 to 1865* (Macon, Georgia: Burke and Company, 1877); John C. Ley, *Fifty-two Years in Florida* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1899); and Simon Peter Richardson, *The Lights and Shadows of Itinerant Life: An Autobiography* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1901). Though the most reliable of the three, Smith's book is concerned primarily with Georgia and only parenthetically with Florida, consequently the amount of space devoted to the peninsular state is negligible. One of the most flagrant errors of Smith

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relative to Florida is (pp. 227-8) in recording that the Tallahassee district and Tallahassee preaching appointments were created in February, 1824, of which time he mistakenly writes: "Tallahassee, the seat of government, was already the center of considerable refinement." The site for the seat of government had not been finally approved at that time and, far from being a center of refinement, it was difficult to locate. Most later historians, including Ley (p. 31), have followed Smith's error. The mistake occurred because of the manner in which conferences are sometimes designated, the "conference of 1824" meeting any time between September, 1824, and March, 1825. Thus, though of the conference of 1824, it was actually not until January, 1825, that the Tallahassee appointments were first made. Similar incidental errors are to be found throughout the volume.

The books by Ley and Richardson are frequently classed as source materials, since each is an autobiographical account, but as sources they are questionable and in their secondary accounts usually unreliable. It is surprising, however, that the books are as accurate as they are since each was written when its author was about eighty years of age, written largely from memory and fragmentary notes, without access to the *Minutes* of the earlier conferences. Ley (p. 60), for example lists the members of the original Florida Conference of 1845 and indicates the total as thirty-one; the number was really thirty-two and examination of his list reveals that he omitted the name of the presiding elder of the Quincy district, Reuben H. Luckey. Similar errors run throughout Ley's book.

Richardson's book, the most interesting of the three, has far more errors than either of the others. His greatest error is undoubtedly in (pp. 124 ff.) attributing the Florida Conference sessions of 1854 to Micanopy when in reality the Micanopy session was not held until December, 1859. Richardson describes minutely the manner in which the "newly elected" Bishop Hubbard H. Kavanaugh presided over this conference; the session was actually held in Madison with Bishop William Capers presiding, Bishop Kavanaugh at the time presiding over conferences west of the Mississippi. Richardson then attributes the 1859 session to Thomasville, Georgia, and describes the "highly unsatisfactory" manner in which Bishop John Early handled the conference; so unsatisfac-

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torily, he declared, that the conference filed charges against the bishop and elected Richardson to the General Conference, instructing him to push the charges. His whole chronology is so confused that it defies disentanglement; Bishop Early had presided at the 1857 session. The value of Richardson's work lies in its anecdotes rather than in its exactness.

The best local Methodist history is F. W. Hoskins, *The History of Methodism in Pensacola, Florida* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1928). Useful works dealing with limited Florida Methodist subjects are: E. J. Hammond, *The Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia* (Atlanta, 1935); R. C. Holmes and Etta B. Willis, *History of the Methodist Church in Quincy* (Quincy, Florida, 1939); C. S. Long, *History of the A. M. E. Church in Florida* (Philadelphia, 1939); J. Rast, *Life Sketches* (Louisville, Kentucky, 1913); D. H. Rutter, "The Sesquicentennial of Methodism in America and the History of the St. Johns River Conference," *Journal of the St. Johns River Conference*, XLVIII (1934), 61-86; H. G. Sims, *History of Southern College* (Lakeland, Florida, 1935); and Anson West, *A History of Methodism in Alabama* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1893).

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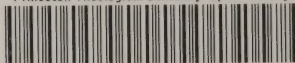
			
			
			
			
			



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